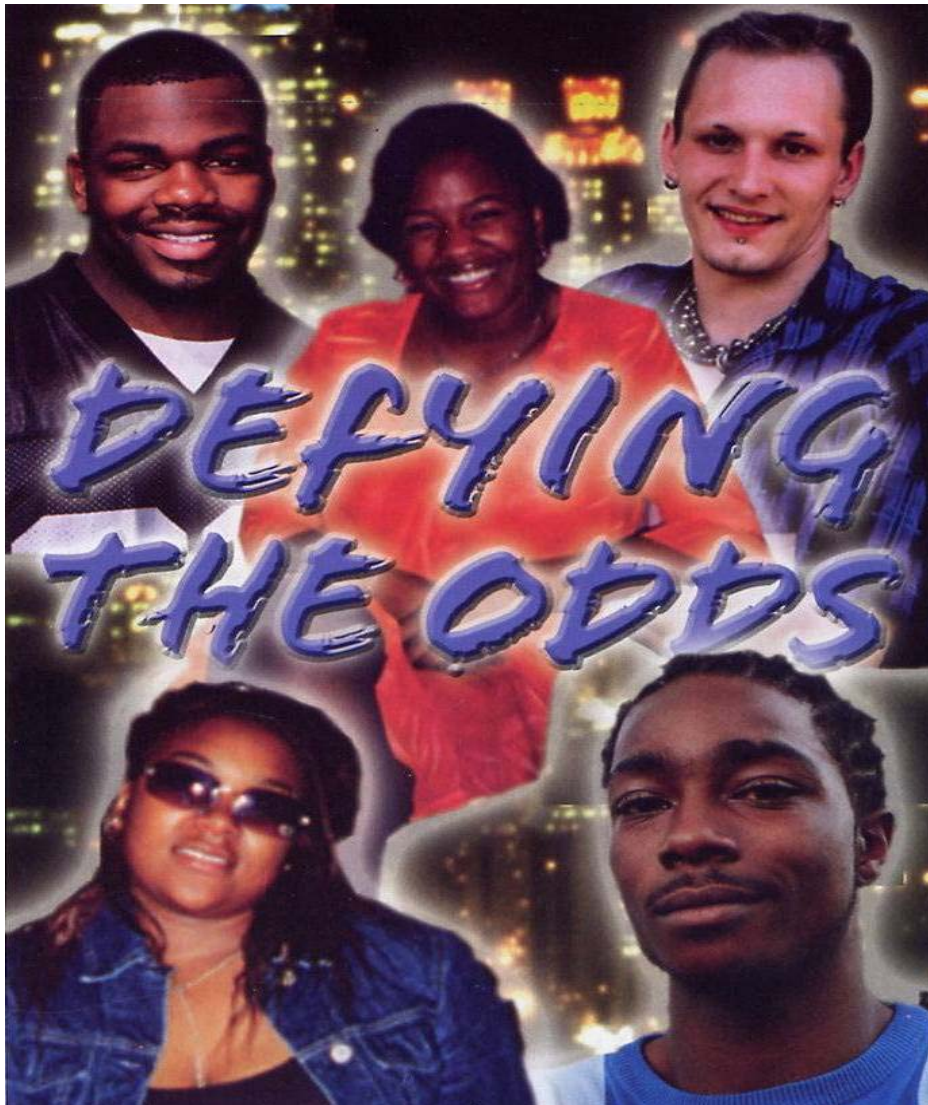


Resource Guide for Educators



Prepared by
PeachStar Education Services
A Division of Georgia Public Broadcasting

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Synopsis

In 1988, 250 inner-city students in Atlanta and nine other U.S. cities were given the opportunity of a lifetime! The Merrill Lynch Foundation promised full scholarships to the college of their choice. All the students had to do was graduate from high school and get accepted into college. It sounds simple but for the first-grade class of 25 students chosen at Capital View Elementary School in southwest Atlanta, the intervening years have been anything but simple.

Since 1998, Georgia Public Television's Emmy-winning team of producer/director Pamela Roberts and videographer Wayne Baumgardner have followed five of these Atlanta students who were given a chance to break free from the inner city to make something of their lives. During the three years in which the documentary was filmed, the students worked to take advantage of the promise while confronted with formidable obstacles: poverty, drugs, family dysfunction, and shattering violence.

The students who are defying the odds are **Calvin**, who experienced the violent death of his best friend; **Marketa**, who had to deal with crack-addicted parents; **John**, who was jailed on drug charges; **Tiffany**, who went on a search for her absent father; and **Tony**, who was able to leave the gang that he had been with since he was nine years old.

Profiles

John, like many of the scholarship students, grew up in a south Atlanta neighborhood infested with drug dealers and crime. His parents struggled with their own substance abuse problems and from time to time were unable to care for John and his older brother, Edric. Hence from an early age, John knew hunger, homelessness, and the world of the streets.

When we first meet John in **DEFYING THE ODDS**, he is in the tenth grade at historic Booker T. Washington High School. We soon find out that John loves music and dreams of being a famous rap musician. John is deeply loyal to his family and friends, although he has a hot temper which can get him into trouble at times. At one point in the documentary, John gets in a fight with his brother, Edric, and moves out of the house. This leads to further problems that land him in jail.

But John is not a quitter. Today he is out of jail, has achieved the G.E.D., and is studying for the SAT. Hopefully he will attend college, using the scholarship that still waits for him.

Marketa grew up in a Houston ghetto known as the Third Ward. Her mother lost both kidneys due to crack addiction, and her father has spent time in jail. As a result, Marketa and her siblings were often left to raise themselves. While in Houston, Marketa attended nine schools and lived in two shelters before entering high school.

Marketa's aunt and uncle intervened in her life when she was sixteen years old, moving her to Atlanta where they live in a solid, middle-class suburb. When we first meet Marketa, she is dealing with the adjustment to people who try to act like parents—something she was not used to in her previous life. This causes some friction, but eventually Marketa realizes the value of having guardians who care enough to become actively involved in her progress.

Despite her background, Marketa surprises her aunt and uncle by doing well in school. When she tells them she wants to be a doctor, they arrange for her to meet another uncle, who takes her on a tour of Atlanta Medical Center and later allows her to be in the operating room when Marketa's aunt gives birth via caesarian section.

Today Marketa is a rising junior in college, but she is expecting a child in July, 2002. Marketa's mother has turned her life around and is now drug-free. She will help Marketa in raising the baby so that Marketa can finish college.

Tony was one of only three white students among the original 25 first graders who received the promise of a scholarship in Atlanta. His father abandoned the family when he was two years old, which left a major scar in Tony's life. Tony portrays his father as a "bad man" who spent time in jail and never got his life together. A naturally bright little boy, Tony became a behavior problem by the time he was in middle school.

When we first meet Tony, he has already dropped out of high school in the ninth grade. His mother and stepfather arrange to send him to military school for high school dropouts, where he is kicked out for fighting after only three days. Later on, Tony achieves his G.E.D. with minimal studying but fails to pass the entrance exam for a technical institute in Atlanta.

At this time Tony is still searching for direction in his life. He is working at odd jobs and says he hasn't given up on the idea of using the scholarship and attending college.

Tiffany grew up in north Philadelphia, which she says is one of the worst places you could ever be from. One of three children, Tiffany was raised by her mother who provided strong values and a solid sense of security for her children. Seeking a better life, the family moved to Atlanta when Tiffany was twelve years old.

When we meet Tiffany, she is thriving in Atlanta where her mother has placed her in a high achievement school. In order to get there, however, Tiffany travels hours each day from her southeast Atlanta home to the affluent northern suburbs where the school is located. Later on she gets a job which lengthens her school/work day to nearly 18 hours. By senior year, Tiffany is a natural leader and honor student who produces a program for the school about the history and importance of hip hop music.

Yet there is a hole in Tiffany's life, and that hole is the absence of her father, whom she did not meet until her teens. In spite of his absence, Tiffany perseveres in her life, and gets accepted to Hampton University, the college of her dreams. She is currently a rising junior at Hampton, majoring in psychology.

Calvin is the seventh of eleven children in a family with a modest income. Calvin's father is a pastor of a small church and his mother devotes her time to the children. Raised with a strong faith not only in God but also in themselves, most of Calvin's older brothers and sisters have attended college on scholarships. This close-knit family has an extraordinarily high ethic of achievement, which Calvin takes completely to heart.

Calvin's love has always been football, and when we meet him in the tenth grade, he is already a star at Southside High School. Not only is he an outstanding athlete, but he is also a member of the National Honor Society, and all the girls have a crush on him!

But Calvin does not escape the facts of inner city life. He experiences the death of his best friend through violence at the end of sophomore year, and we are with Calvin when he is the pallbearer at the funeral, a wrenching moment in his life. Calvin also goes through hard times in his junior year with football injuries and his grades, but because of his indomitable mother, we know Calvin will always make it though.

Today Calvin attends Grambling University in Louisiana, where he is a member of the football team.

Documentary Themes

The five students profiled in **DEFYING THE ODDS** are faced with a myriad of social, family and economic challenges. Ranging from gang affiliation to violence to drugs, Calvin, Tiffany, John, Tony, and Marketa each take different routes to navigate through these dangerous waters.

Did you know? In Georgia,

Violence

- The annual rate of teen deaths rate by accident, homicide, and suicide is 63 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19¹
- In 1996 there were 162 children and teens *19 years of age and younger* shot and killed with firearms in Georgia: 81 in firearm homicides; 51 in firearm suicides; 24 in unintentional shootings; and six firearm deaths of unknown intent²
- The arrest rate for juveniles charged with crimes more than doubled between 1990 and 1995. Almost 50,000 arrests of juveniles under 18 are made annually for larceny, theft, and violent crimes

Education

- 12% of teens are high school dropouts (ages 16-19); one of the highest rates in the U.S

Poverty

- 9% of teens are not attending school and not working (ages 16-19)
- 26% of youth are living with parents who do not have full-time, year-round employment
- 22% of children are living in poverty

Family Structures

- 26% of families with children are headed by a single parent
- Every year more than 20,000 babies start their lives with a serious disadvantage because they are born to mothers who are teens, unmarried, or lack a high school education³

References:

1Kids Count Data Book Online. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.

<http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2002/>

2Violence Policy Center, 2000. <http://www.vpc.org/press/9905ga.htm>

3Georgians for Children. www.georgians.co

Health

- 13% of children are without health insurance
- Compared to other states, the infant mortality rate in Georgia is among the highest in the U.S. Each year about 1,000 babies born in Georgia die before their first birthday

Desired Learning Outcomes

After viewing and completing the activities in this *Resource Guide*, the learner will demonstrate understanding of the vocabulary terms used in **DEFYING THE ODDS**. They will assess the resources available to them personally by completing the *Resources Assessment Rubric*. During the viewing of **DEFYING THE ODDS** they will complete a *Concept Web* for each of the main characters. After viewing **DEFYING THE ODDS**, they will use a *Venn Diagram* to compare and contrast themselves with one of the main characters. Through guided group discussions and activities, the learner will participate in other activities provided in this resource guide to further their understanding of their own 'at risk' factors.

It is the goal of this *Resource Guide* that:

1. Students will develop self-respect and respect for others.
2. Students will be able to analyze situations and make well thought-out decisions.
3. Students will understand the need to establish personal support systems.
4. Students will learn the importance of setting short/long term goals.
5. Students will learn to use decision-making skills.
6. Students will understand the relationship between academic success and planning their future.
7. Students will learn problem- solving skills for resolving conflicts with family and/or friends.
8. Students will develop good character.
9. Students will find their motivation increased.
10. Students will build self-esteem.
11. Students will develop self-discipline.
12. Students will exhibit concern for their community.

Standards Addressed

Standard Number	Character Education
2	Respect for and acceptance of authority: the need for and primacy of authority, including the law, in given circumstances.
3	Equality: the right and opportunity to develop one's potential as a human being.
5	Justice: equal and impartial treatment under the law.
7	Tolerance: the allowable deviation from a standard. Indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.
10	Respect for the creator: our most basic freedoms and rights are not granted to us from the government but they are intrinsically ours.
11	Altruism: concern for and motivation to act for the welfare of others.
12	Integrity: confirmed virtue and uprightness of character, freedom from hypocrisy. 12.1 Honesty: truthfulness and sincerity. 12.2 Truth: freedom from deceit or falseness, based on fact or reality. 12.3 Trustworthiness: worth of confidence. 12.4 Fairness and good sportsmanship: freedom from favoritism, self-interest, or indulgence of one's likes and dislikes; abiding by the rules of a contest and accepts victory or defeat graciously. 12.5 Patience: not being hasty or impetuous.
13	Accountability: responsibility for one's actions and their consequences. 13.1 Commitment: being emotionally, physically or intellectually bound to something. 13.2 Perseverance and diligence: adherence to actions and their consequences. 13.3 Self control and virtue: exercising authority over one's emotions and actions. 13.4 Frugality: effective use of resources; thrift.
14	Self-Esteem: pride and belief in oneself and in achievement of one's potential. 14.1 Knowledge: learning, understanding, awareness. 14.2 Moderation: avoidance of unreasonably extreme views or measures. 14.3 Respect for physical, mental and fiscal health: awareness of the importance of and conscious activity toward maintaining fitness in these areas. 14.4 Cleanliness: good habits of personal hygiene and grooming.
15	Work Ethic: belief that work is good and that everyone who can, should work. 15.1 Punctuality: being on time for attendance and tasks. 15.2 Accomplishment: appreciation for completing a task. 15.3 Cooperation: working with others for mutual benefit. 15.4 Dependability: reliability; trustworthiness. 15.5 Diligence: attentiveness; persistence; perseverance. 15.6 Pride: dignity; self-respect; doing one's best. 15.7 Productivity: supporting one's self, contributing to society. 15.8 Creativity: exhibiting an entrepreneurial spirit inventiveness; originality; not bound by the norm. 15.9 School pride: playing a contributing role in maintaining and improving all aspects of a school's environment, programs and activities within the context of contributing to the betterment of the city, county and state.
Standard Number	Health
1	Determines how adolescent use of alcohol and other drugs contributes to accidents, crime, and suicide.
4	Compares how alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and nonuse impacts personal

	goals, educational opportunities, and occupational choices.
19	Identifies the benefits of setting personal goals for maintaining a healthy body.
21	Evaluates how one's genetics and health choices contribute to disease (heredity, inactivity, diet, stress, environment, infections, and degenerative processes) and proposes strategies to reduce risk.
22	Identifies factors that promote a positive self-image (e.g., accepting responsibility; respect for self, authority and others, and self-discipline, self-control and the right to be assertive).
25	Identifies social, emotional, intellectual, and economic aspects of dating.
27	Analyzes changes in the prospective parents' lifestyles and responsibilities before and after the birth of their baby.
31	Lists ways heredity and environment affect human growth and development.
32	Analyzes stress and its effects on all aspects of health and wellness.
33	Develops and practices effective coping skills for managing stress to prevent self-destructive behaviors (e.g., suicide).
34	Demonstrates effective communication skills and resistance skills (e.g., nature of conflict, feelings, active listening, effective communication skills, and empathy).
35	Demonstrates characteristics of a healthy decision-maker.
36	Explores the increased responsibility in the transition from adolescence to adulthood and proposes ways to make these changes easier.
42	Correlates hygiene and grooming habits with employment opportunities and building relationships.
45	Identifies local support system concerning personal safety (e.g., family, teacher, religious advisor, friend, and counselor).
Standard Number	Guidance
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify and appreciate personal interests, abilities, and skills. -Demonstrate the ability to use peer feedback. -Demonstrate an understanding of how individual characteristics relate to achieving personal, social, educational, and career goals. -Demonstrate an understanding of environmental influences on one's behavior. -Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between personal behavior and self-concept.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills. -Demonstrate interpersonal skills required for working with and for others. -Describe appropriate employer and employee interactions in various situations. -Demonstrate how to express feelings, reactions, and ideas in an appropriate manner.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Describe how developmental changes affect physical and mental health. -Describe the effect of emotional and physical health on career decisions. -Describe healthy ways of dealing with stress. -Demonstrate behaviors that maintain physical and mental health.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Demonstrate how to apply academic and vocational skills to personal interests. -Describe the relationship of academic and vocational skills to personal interests. -Describe how skills developed in academic and vocational programs relate to career goals. -Describe how education relates to the selection of college majors, further training, and/or entry into the job market. -Demonstrate transferable skills that can apply to a variety of occupations and changing occupational requirements. -Describe how learning skills are required in the workplace.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify the positive contributions workers make to society. -Demonstrate knowledge of the social significance of various occupations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Demonstrate a positive attitude toward work. -Demonstrate learning habits and skills that can be used in various educational situations. -Demonstrate positive work attitudes and behaviors.
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Demonstrate career plans that reflect the importance of lifelong learning. -Demonstrate knowledge of postsecondary vocational and academic programs. -Demonstrate knowledge that changes may require retraining and upgrading of employees' skills. -Describe school and community resources to explore educational and occupational choices. -Describe the costs and benefits of self-employment. -Demonstrate occupational skills developed through volunteer experiences, part-time employment, or cooperative educational programs. -Demonstrate skills necessary to compare education and job opportunities. -Develop an individual career plan, updating information from earlier plans, and including tentative decisions to be implemented after high school.
Standard Number	Communication Systems
1	Locate, understand, and interpret written information in a variety of formats, including such documents as manuals, graphs, reports, and schedules.
6	Specify goals, objectives, constraints, and supporting factors.
7	Identify problems, alternative solutions, and consequences of alternative solutions, and use appropriate techniques to resolve given problems.
8	Implement a plan of action making modifications as needed to achieve stated objectives.
10	Assess self accurately, set personal goals, monitor progress, and exhibit self-control.
15	Participate and interact as a team member and leader.
Standard Number	Technology Integration
1	Demonstrates the essential skills for understanding, using, and managing technology tools.
13	Creates and shares multimedia presentations.
19	Uses technology and telecommunications tools to locate, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, apply, and communicate information.

Before Viewing

Use these activities and questions to help students think about the documentary before they view it.

1. Teacher/Counselor will describe the plot summary of **DEFYING THE ODDS**.
2. Teacher/Counselor will provide a thumbnail sketch of each principle character, **without providing outcomes of what happens to characters**.
3. Students will use the following Internet resources to research the current status of children in Georgia and prepare summary reports to the class.

Kids Count Data Book Online. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.
<http://www.aecf.org/kidscount.kc2002>

Violence Policy Center, 2000.
<Http://www.vpc.org/press/9905ga.htm>

Georgians for Children
<http://www.georgians.com>

4. Teacher/Counselor will introduce vocabulary terms using the “Matching Worksheet.”
5. Students will complete the “Assess Your Resources” rubric.

DEFYING THE ODDS

Vocabulary

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Match the letters of the clues with the words.

Letter	Words	Clues
	Financial Resources	a. Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group
	Emotional Resources	b. Having physical health and mobility
	Mental Resources	c. Having the money to purchase goods and services
	Spiritual Resources	d. Having frequent access to adult(s) who are nurturing and who do not engage in self-destructive behaviors
	Physical Resources	e. Being able to choose and control Responses without engaging in self-destructive behaviors
	Support Systems	f. Believing in divine purpose and guidance
	Relationships/Role Models	g. Having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need
	Knowledge of Hidden Rules	h. Having the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life

Source: Payne, R.K. (2001). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highland, TX: Aha! Process, Inc.

Answer Key

DEFYING THE ODDS

Vocabulary

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Match the letters of the clues with the words.

Letter	Words	Clues
c	Financial Resources	a. Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group
e	Emotional Resources	b. Having physical health and mobility
h	Mental Resources	c. Having the money to purchase goods and services
f	Spiritual Resources	d. Having frequent access to adult(s) who are nurturing and who do not engage in self-destructive behaviors
b	Physical Resources	e. Being able to choose and control responses without engaging in self-destructive behaviors
g	Support Systems	f. Believing in divine purpose and guidance
d	Relationships/Role Models	g. Having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need
a	Knowledge of Hidden Rules	h. Having the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life

Source: Payne, R.K. (2001). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highland, TX: Aha! Process, Inc.

DEFYING THE ODDS

Resources Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use this rubric to assess your resources. Enter the point(s) in the extreme right column to indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement. Total your points.

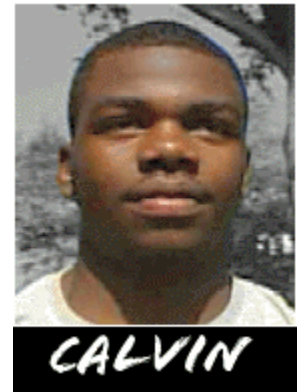
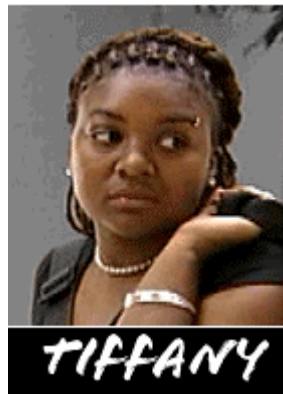
ASSESS YOUR RESOURCES					
	Criteria				Points
	1	2	3	4	
I have the money to purchase goods and services.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I am able to choose and control my emotional responses without engaging in self-destructive behavior.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I have the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I believe in divine purpose and guidance.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I have physical health and mobility.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I have friends, family and backup resources available to access in times of need.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I have frequent access to adult(s) who are nurturing and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I know the unspoken cues and habits of a group.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
				Total	

Source: Payne, R.K. (2001). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highland, TX: Aha! Process, Inc.

During Viewing

Assign each student one character to follow during viewing. Students will use the “Concept Web” forms to record their answers to the following questions:

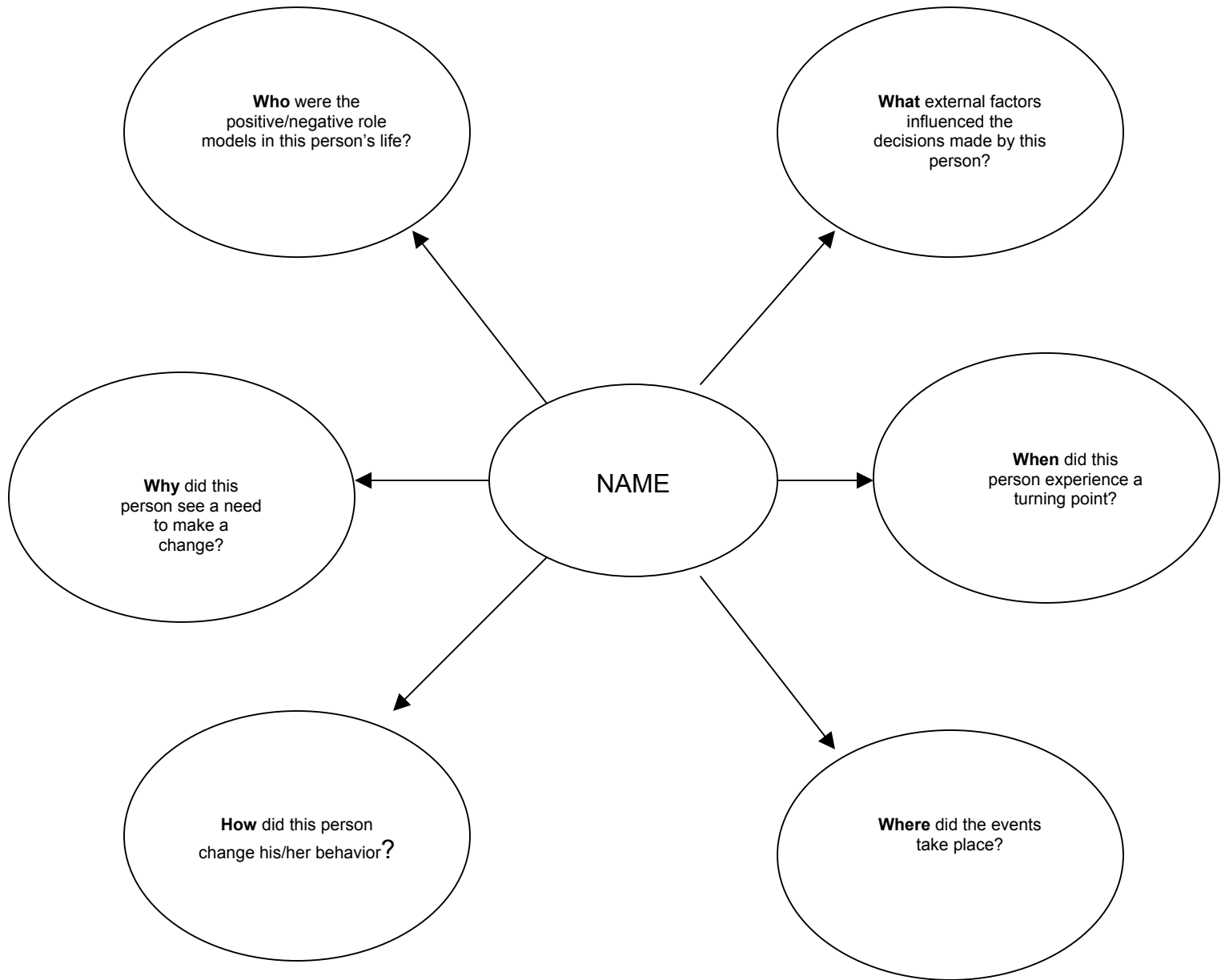
- **Who** were positive/negative role models in this person’s life?
- **What** external factors influenced the decisions this person made?
- **When** did this person experience a turning point?
- **Where** did these events take place?
- **How** did this person change his/her behavior?
- **Why** did this person see a need to make changes?



DEFYING THE ODDS

Concept Web

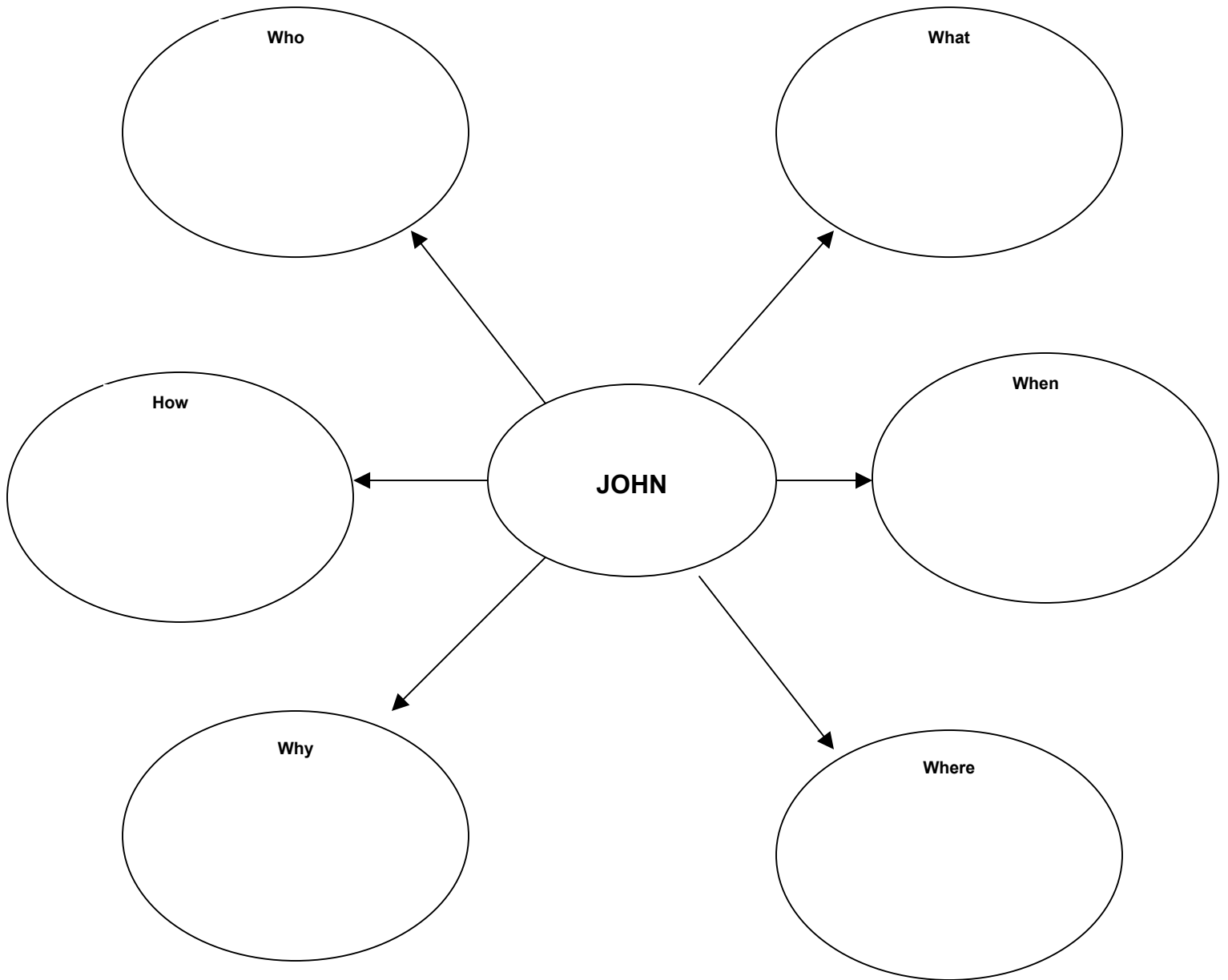
Name: _____ Date: _____



DEFYING THE ODDS

Concept Web

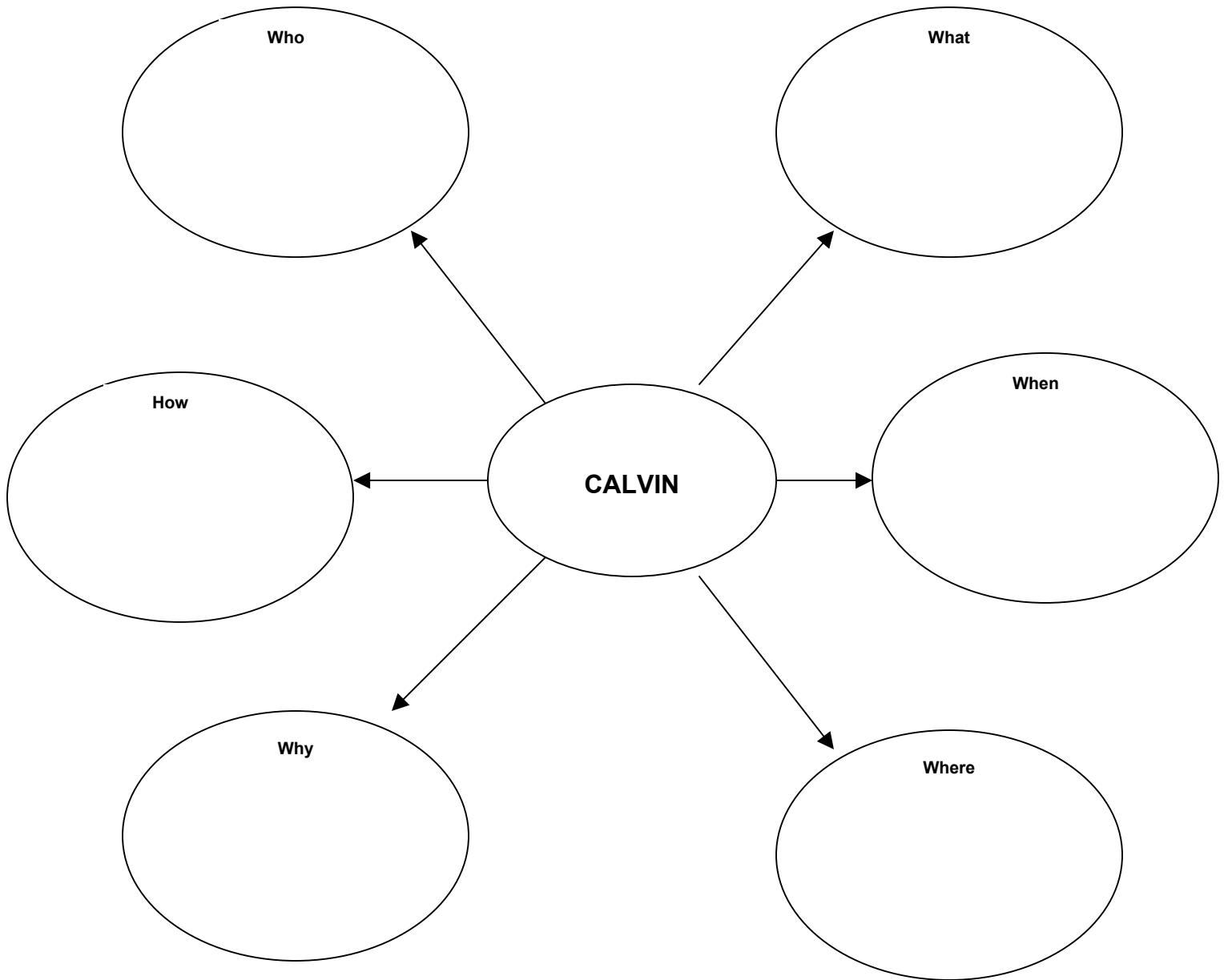
Name: _____ Date: _____



DEFYING THE ODDS

Concept Web

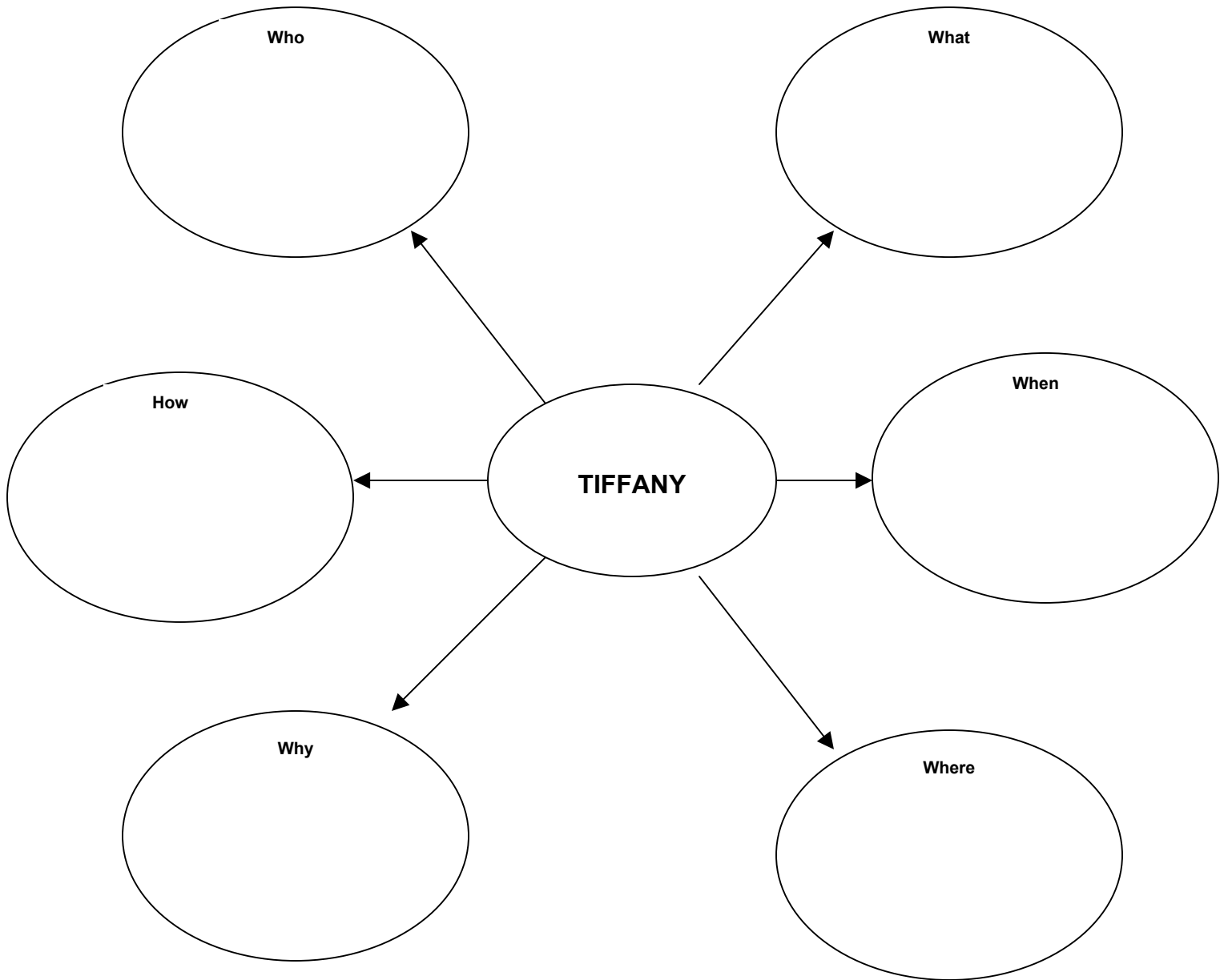
Name: _____ Date: _____



DEFYING THE ODDS

Concept Web

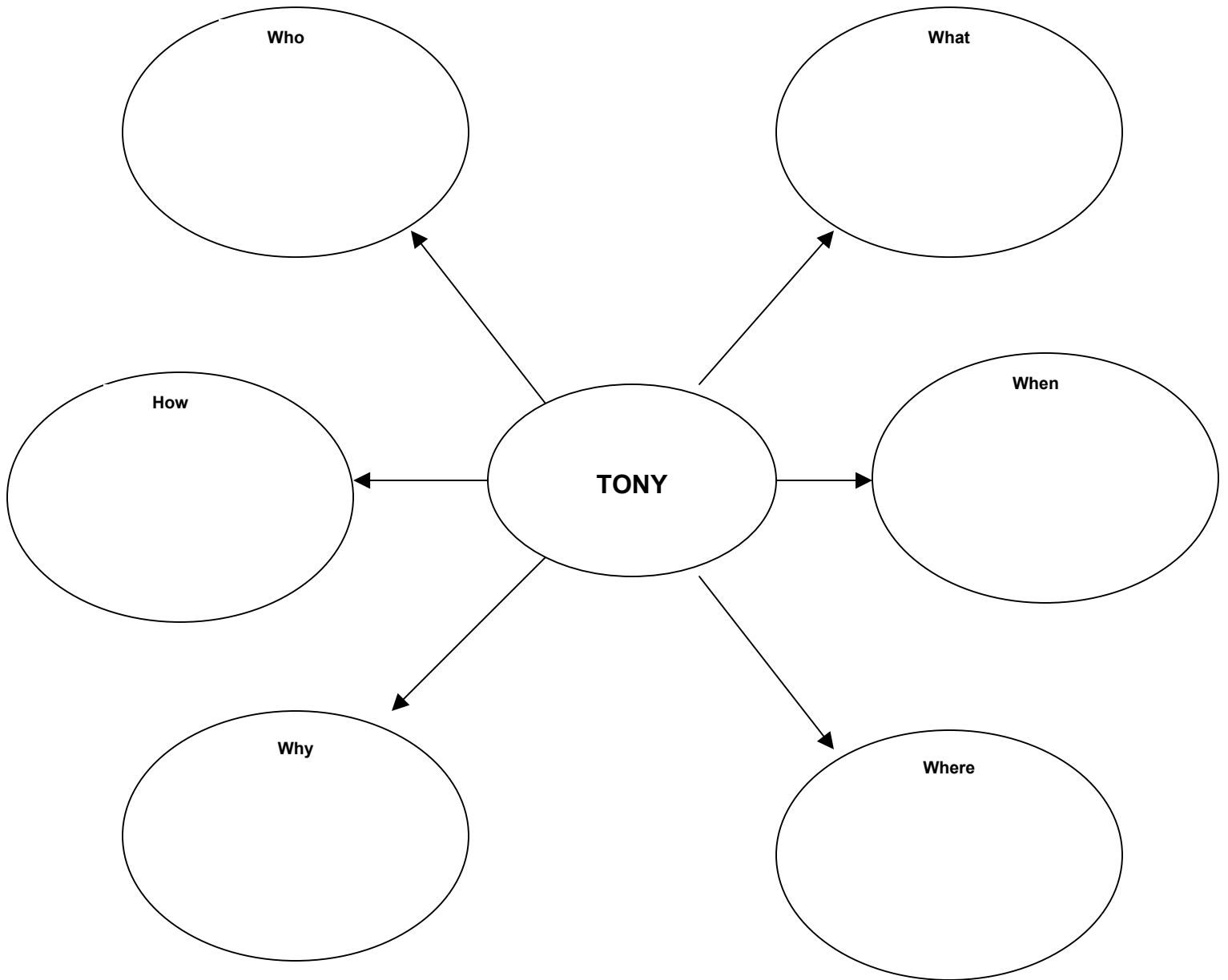
Name: _____ Date: _____



DEFYING THE ODDS

Concept Web

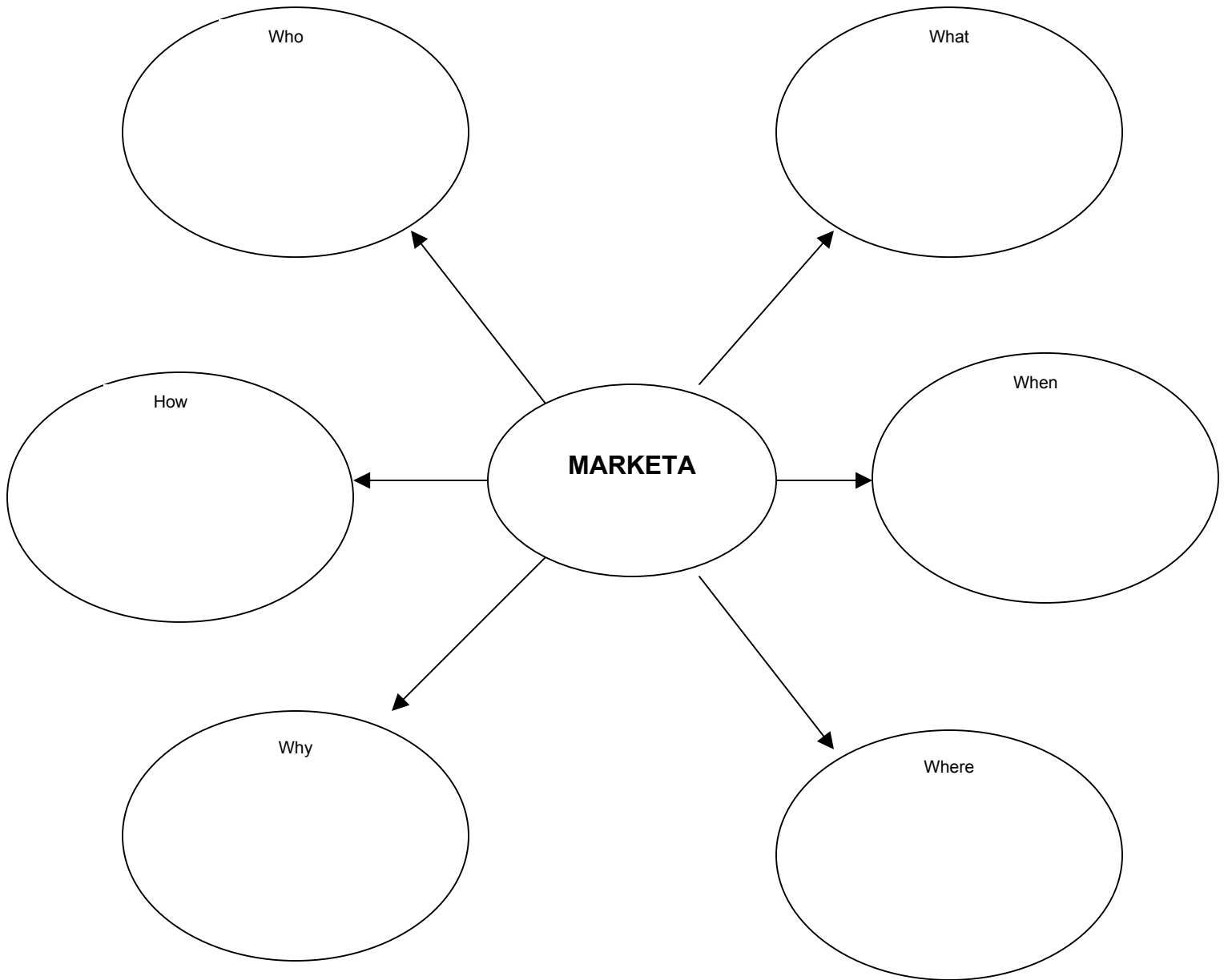
Name: _____ Date: _____



DEFYING THE ODDS

Concept Web

Name: _____ Date: _____



After Viewing

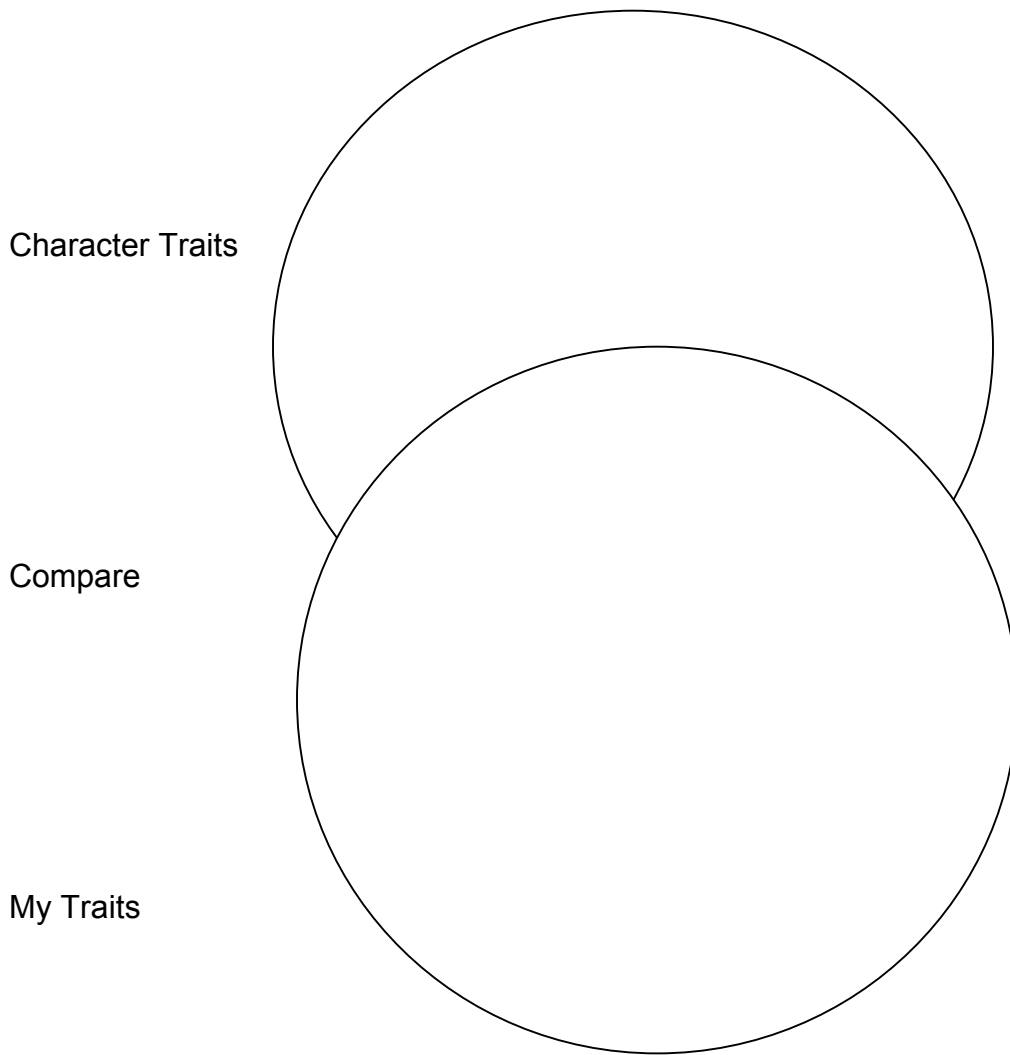
1. Students will use the Venn Diagram to compare themselves to one of the characters.
2. Students will make a list of their heroes (famous or not). Discuss how each 'hero' defied the odds.
3. Students will work in small groups to produce an 8-10 slide Powerpoint presentation about an individual who has "defied the odds." Describe your individual in terms of resiliency.
4. Students will complete a second "Assess Your Resources" rubric. Discuss changes in the outcomes.
5. As a group discuss the following:
 - Where do you think each character is now? Predict where this person will be in 5 years.
 - Based on what you know about the character, how did you arrive at your prediction?
 - Why is money not enough to solve the problems these people faced in Defying the Odds?

DEFYING THE ODDS

Venn Diagram

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Choose a character from **Defying The Odds** to compare and contrast your traits with. Use the Venn Diagram to list differences in your character's traits and your personal traits. Then compare any similar traits that you share.



Risk Factors

Individuals who are exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives are at greater risk to school failure, substance abuse, mental health, and juvenile delinquency problems. Following are factors that are associated with at-risk students.

Individual and peer risk factors:

- Alienation and rebelliousness
- Anti-social behavior and hyperactivity
- Association with peers engaged in similar at-risk behavior

School risk factors:

- Academic failure
- School transitions
- Early anti-social behavior
- Low commitment to school

Family risk factors:

- Poor parental monitoring
- Family management problems
- Distant, uninvolved, and inconsistent parenting
- Unclear family rules, expectations, and rewards
- Parental drug use and positive attitudes toward drug use

Community risk factors:

- Transitions and mobility
- Community disorganization
- Low neighborhood attachment
- Economic and social deprivation

Source: Hawkins, D. & Catalano, R. (1993). *Communities that care: Action for drug abuse prevention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Additional Extension Activities

Following are extension activities that can be used by counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and community groups working with at-risk students. The purpose of these activities is to provide students with the experiences that will allow them to develop skills in identifying, analyzing, and solving problems.

Activity #1 –Developing Self-Respect

Objective: Students will learn how to develop self-respect and respect for others.

Establish the Need: It is important for youth to develop realistic and fulfilling life plans based upon a clear understanding of themselves, their needs, abilities, interests, and skills. In order to have a clear understanding of self, youth must develop self-respect. As witnessed in **DEFYING THE ODDS**, lack of self-respect can lead to involvement in gangs, drugs, violence, and related asocial behaviors.

Introduction: Have the students complete Activity #1 worksheet, “Respect .” Use the questions and answers to lead a discussion on developing respect.

Practice: Students will be given a homework assignment to return to class for further discussion on developing respect.

Writing Assignment: Use **DEFYING THE ODDS** video to have students write about how the actions of the characters demonstrated disrespectful behavior. List ways the characters could have been more respectful in each situation.

Activity #1 - Respect Worksheet

1. What is your definition of respect?

2. Do you consider yourself to be a respectful person? Why or why not?

3. Do you think people at your school are respectful of each other? Why or why not?

4. Do you think people in your neighborhood are respectful of each other? Why or why not?

5. How do you think you can gain self-respect and respect for others?

Activity #2 –Making Good Decisions

Objective: Students will use a problem-solving model to make thoughtful decisions.

Establish the Need: Just like the individuals in **DEFYING THE ODDS**, youth are faced with making decisions every day. Some are simple; others are complex. Many of these decisions are being made without careful thought. It is important that decisions be made with developed thinking skills. Teachers can help youth learn decision-making skills and put those skills into practice.

Introduction: The teacher will pass out the following scenario for the class to read.

Marcy is a teenager who attends a high achievement school. She is a good student and is well liked by her teachers and peers. She is also talented and uses her talents to head the school's drama team. Marcy lives in the inner-city and is raised by her mother who provides strong values and a solid sense of security for her. She lives in a neighborhood that is poverty-stricken and filled with violence. As a result of the environment, many teens become consumed with survival and education becomes a low priority. She is attractive and is admired by several boys in her neighborhood. Justin, a popular guy at school and in the neighborhood, is one of them. Like most teenagers in Marcy's neighborhood he is also a potential high school dropout. He has been known to be involved in gang activity and drugs around the neighborhood. Marcy's mother has asked her to not associate with him and his friends.

One day at school, Justin approaches Marcy and asks her to attend a party with him and some other neighborhood friends after school at his home. Before answering she asks if his parents or any adults will be present. Justin admits his parents will be working, but they are aware of the party.

Later during the day, she hears several students talking about attending the party after school and decides she doesn't want to miss out. Thinking of her mother's desire for her to not associate with Justin, Marcy calls and tells her mother that there is a drama club meeting after school that she forgot about. Her mother gives her permission to stay for the meeting and tells her to come home immediately after the meeting. Marcy then meets Justin after school and attends the party with him.

Coincidentally, after school the drama teacher calls Marcy's home to discuss details about the upcoming show. Marcy's mother asks if today's meeting was over and is informed that a meeting was not held.....

While the students are reading the scenario the teacher will list the following skill components on the board:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Define your goal.
3. Think of as many solutions to the problem as you can.
4. For each potential solution, consider all consequences.
5. Choose your best solution.
6. Rethink the solution a few more times.
7. Make a decision.
8. Act upon your decision.

Next, the teacher will ask two students to role-play Marcy and her mother. After the mother confronts Marcy about being untruthful, the teacher will stop them to show the class how they can use the skill components to help Marcy make a better decision.

Large group practice: Divide the class into three groups and distribute Activity #2 - "Making Decisions" worksheet. Assign a problem to each group and have each group discuss their decisions and thinking process. (Groups must keep the skill components in mind when making decisions).

Individual practice: Teacher will give the students a homework assignment to be returned for discussion in class.

Directions for homework assignment - Write an essay about an event in your life in which an important decision had to be made. Describe the decision that was made, explain the thinking process that helped you arrive at the decision, and tell why this was the best decision.

ACTIVITY #2 “MAKING DECISIONS”

Directions: Read the assigned scenario and decide as a group how the problem can be solved. Groups must be able to explain how the skill components were applied to arrive at the solution.

Scenario #1

You are the captain of the school football team. Your best friend who is also one of the team’s best players is rumored to be using drugs before games to enhance his abilities on the field. The use of drugs is against team and school rules. The health of your friend and the team’s success are on the line. You must decide how to approach this situation with your friend and the team.

Scenario #2

After spending the day with your best friend, her mother returns home drunk and wants to drive you home.

Scenario #3

During dance team camp you share a room with a very popular girl on the team. One day, while cleaning the room you discover a small plastic bag with something that looks like marijuana in it. You do not want to accuse her of using drugs, but you decide you must speak to her about your discovery and why it is there. After all you share a room and share responsibility for what is in the room

Activity #3 -Learning to Cope With Stressful Family Situations

Objective: Students will learn how to use problem-solving skills to resolve family conflict.

Establish the Need: Like the individuals in **DEFYING THE ODDS**, we know there are students who come from stressful family situations that affect their behavior in school. Students can learn to cope during stressful situations by developing problem-solving skills.

Introduction: Ask students to respond to the following questions on a sheet of paper.

What would you do if your older brother always pushed you around?

What would you do if your mother was playing around with a gun in the house?

What would do if you saw your sister stealing from your mother's purse?

What would you do if you witnessed your drunken father hitting your mother?

The students will discuss their responses and tell why they think the decision will solve the problem.

Give the students a list of the following skill components that can be helpful when dealing with a stressful family situation.

1. Observe carefully what is happening around you.
2. Analyze the family problem.
3. Determine if this is a short / long term problem.
4. Analyze the effects on you.
5. Think about your options for coping.
6. Decide if it is best to ignore or face the problem.
7. Decide if you or your family member needs help.
8. If no, plan how you can cope with the situation.
9. If yes, consider who could provide the best help.
10. Do what is needed to get help.

The teacher will explain how using the skill components can be helpful to resolve each problem.

Students will practice using the skill components to resolve each problem.

Role Playing Activity- Students will be selected to role play the following situations:

1. Maia was looking in her brother's room for his car keys. While looking for the keys, she finds a handgun.
2. Jessica's mother comes home drunk and becomes angry when she notices that the dishes have not been washed.
3. Daymond's mom and dad were having another fight. Daymond hates it when they yell and scream at each other.
4. Kate's older brother is always hitting her. Lately, the hits have been harder, leaving bruises.

When each role-play is complete the teacher and the remaining students will decide if the skill components were used correctly with each situation.

Activity #4– Selecting Appropriate Role Models

Objective: Students will learn to select appropriate role models who will become a part of their support system and will lead them to a productive life.

Establish the Need: Appropriate role models can be examples to youth of how to discover and realize their own talents and inspire them to achieve and succeed in life. Students will realize the individuals who were most successful in **DEFYING THE ODDS** had established support systems with appropriate role models.

After viewing **DEFYING THE ODDS**, the instructor will ask the following questions to the group for discussion:

- **What characteristics do you admire in a person?**
- **How would you select a role model?**
- **Should you follow a role model blindly or be discerning?**
- **What kind of a role model would be especially good for you?**
- **Can you blame a role model for your actions? Is the responsibility yours or can you shift it to another person?**

The instructor will read the following story to the group:

Kyle just turned 17 years old. During the past two years he has been watching, listening, and reading everything he can about his favorite music star. His parents seem to think the music star's message revolves around drugs, sex, and violence. Kyle's parents have worked very hard to keep negative influences away from him, but as he gets older he is being exposed to things that they cannot control.

One day, Kyle has a chance to attend the concert of his favorite music star with his best friend, Jake. Lately, the two boys have begun dressing like their favorite music star and collecting all of his CDs and posters.

Jake's father works at the radio station and was able to get 2 free tickets and backstage passes for the boys to attend the concert to meet their favorite music star. Kyle's parents agree to let him attend the show, but remind him to be responsible.

After the show, the boys are finally allowed to enter the backstage dressing area. The crowded room is filled with girls, bottles of alcohol, and smoke. As the boys approach their favorite music star, he greets them openly and offers them a smoke.

Kyle knows that drugs are illegal and staying to hang out with the music star could get them in some trouble. He remembers his parents' advice, but he also thinks about his idol and how he looks up to him. He thinks if his idol does it, it must not be too bad. What do you think he decides to do?

Ask group to respond to the following questions:

Who is Kyle's role model?

Why did Kyle choose a role model who talked about doing illegal things?

Would it be better for Kyle to select a different role model?

What qualities in a role model should Kyle look for?

Is this person available to Kyle in the time of need?

Present the following skill components on sentence strips:

1. List the good and bad characteristics of your role model.
2. Identify the role model's behavior.
3. Decide if the role model is involved in socially acceptable activities that are good for you.
4. Could this person be a part of your personal support system?
5. Make a decision about choosing this person to be your role model.

Discussion- The large group will form four smaller groups and will apply skill components when asked the following questions:

- If you were Kyle or in a similar situation, what would you decide to do?
- Is it okay for Kyle to use drugs and drink alcohol because his favorite music star does?
- If Kyle agrees to doing drugs and drinking alcohol, who would be responsible if the police were to enter the room? What would be the consequences when caught?

Independent use: The instructor will require the students to do a follow up assignment. The students will have two weeks to research a current news story involving a high profile person in the public eye who has been involved in inappropriate activities. Students should provide written discussion of how this person could have avoided getting involved in such a situation. The students will return the written assignment to share in class for discussion.

Strategies for Working with At-Risk Youth

Counselors

DEFYING THE ODDS covers several issues that students at your school and families in your community may be experiencing. Counselors are in a position to provide a variety of intervention and prevention services to assist students and families in resolving these problems.

Suggested strategies to improve family involvement at school.

Drop in policy

Parents are invited to drop in to the school and discuss any concern.

Back to School Night

Parent participation in classroom instruction issues, staff familiarization, and clarification of course goals and standards

School Site Council

Parent participation in planning and reviewing of school performance and policy issues.

Homework Hotline

Parents are given phone numbers to call regarding homework assignments for their children.

Newsletter

Inform parents of current issues at the school site. Report past issues, future events and contact information.

Interagency Referrals

Parents are advised of community agencies that offer services that may assist them with specific family issues.

Healthy Start

Families are given information about community health services for the family.

P & S Day

Parent and student participation in discussing how to improve at risk students academic skills.

Volunteer Opportunities

Parents volunteer to assist school staff as field trip chaperones, tutors, monitors, and classroom aides.

Teachers

The starting point for helping at-risk students to succeed is the deep belief that, “no child should be left behind.” Believing that every student is capable of reaching their full potential is critical when working with individuals who are at-risk. Like the students in ***DEFYING THE ODDS***, all students need positive support from teachers in order to be successful.

Following are strategies that teachers can use in working with students who are at risk of failure.

- Help the student set realistic and manageable goals.
- Allow enough time for the student to complete tasks.
- Help the student problem solve difficult situations.
- Recognize and understand cultural differences among the students.
- Offer “hands-on” experiences in and out of the classroom.
- Conduct early intervention conferences about possible at-risk students.
- Involve parents in dealing with at-risk students.
- Familiarize students with resources that are available (individual counseling, group counseling, after school tutoring programs, etc.).
- Identify teachers and staff members who would be good mentors for at-risk students.
- Initiate an Adopt-a-Student program (faculty and staff members adopt at-risk students for the school year).
- Invite parents to observe in classrooms and make them feel comfortable in the school setting.
- Provide non-threatening situations for parents to assist in the classroom.
- Transcend language barriers by using translators and community resources.

Parents

Research consistently finds that parent/family involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement. When families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior, graduate at higher rates, and have greater enrollment in higher education (Henderson & Berla 1994).

Following are strategies parents can use to become more involved with their children.

- Begin a discussion on positive behaviors, values, and character traits.
- Talk with children and teenagers about the importance of keeping positive influences around them.
- Explain the relationship between high achievement and higher education.
- Discuss the connection between challenging coursework and higher education.
- Talk to teenagers about the consequences of drugs, sex, alcohol, gang participation, etc.
- Set standards of behavior, limits, and clear expectations for children both in and out of school and develop mutually agreed-upon rules about homework, extracurricular participation grades, curfews, and places that are off limits.
- Discuss the importance of building a network of other adults with whom they can talk about issues that concern them or stressful situations.
- Show interest and concern in their progress at school.
- Praise skills and efforts.

Source: Henderson, A.T. & Berla, N. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (1998) has identified the following benefits of family involvement in education:

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level.
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
- Student whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in postsecondary education. Different types of parent/family involvement produce different gains. To have long-lasting gains for students, parent involvement activities must be well planned, inclusive, and comprehensive.
- Juniors and senior high school students whose parents remain involved make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to (1) create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and (3) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.
- Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. They also hold higher opinions of those parents.

Source: Henderson, A.T. & Berla, N. (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to school achievement.. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Collaboration with Community & Business Groups

It is important for schools to collaborate with their local community. The collective involvement of parents, community leaders, businesses, school officials, health providers, and law enforcement assisting with empowering youth to make positive, constructive, and healthful choices.

Ideas for Community and Business Groups

A big part of students' being successful comes from the support and cooperation of the entire community. Children spend a significant amount of time in the community, and it is essential that community groups (including law enforcement and social services, juvenile justice agencies, foundations, etc.) and businesses provide them with assistance and support. Some actions community and business groups can take to assist schools are:

- Adopt and support a school.
- Work collaboratively with the schools in developing and sponsoring community projects for the youth living in the community.
- Open businesses and corporate facilities for field trips, apprenticeships, and internships for students.
- Promote awareness of career and college opportunities and the availability of financial aid and scholarships.
- Sponsor a scholarship program.
- Encourage employees to visit and support the school and/or mentor a child at the school.
- Become knowledgeable about the operation of schools in the community and participate in school reform efforts.