

Independent Living Instructors and Social Workers: This Page Is for You

Use *Represent* in IL Classes

This issue's IL section starts on page 30. It focuses on daily living skills like cleaning, doing laundry and cooking. Teens can read these stories as background which will help them realize that their peers think these are important issues. However, it's hard to learn these skills by reading, so the following lessons include active involvement. The more you can get the teens involved, the more the lessons will stick with them.

Following is a plan for how to bring this issue's theme to your independent living class. (If you have feedback on how the lessons work with your group, we'd love to hear it! Please call 212-279-0708 x114.)

Cheap Cleaning Challenge Game

Challenge: Who can come up with the cheapest list of cleaning materials for a new apartment?

Goals: To help teens recognize the key cleaning chores involved in living on their own. To help teens become smart consumers of cleaning supplies.

Tell students to imagine that they're moving into a new apartment and they have to buy a month's worth of cleaning supplies. Their goal is to spend as little as possible while still getting the items they need. (You can have students do this exercise individually or in teams.)

The rules: They have to "buy" items to clean dishes, the sink, countertops, kitchen floor (probably linoleum), other floors (assume they are wood, not carpeted), toilet, and glass.

You can decide how much guidance you want to give (maybe not much so that you'll get a wide range of costs from the kids).

Send the teens to a local store. Give them a list on which you've written across the top: Item Name, Size, Cost, and Purpose for each thing they would buy. (For example, Ivory Liquid, 12 oz., \$3, for cleaning dishes.) They must complete all four columns for each item they would buy. Then they should add up each item for a total cost.

Tips: Here are some typical and not so typical ways that students can save money. See which of these they do, and praise the kids who do them. (One important aspect of this lesson is to show the kids they already know a lot about how to save money. Another is to share strategies.) If they don't think of some of these things, tell them (at the end of the discussion).

1. Buy Brand X instead of Brand Name.
2. Buy an appropriate size (not so large you'll never use it all; not so small that you're paying a lot per ounce)
3. Substitute: If you have a small apartment, do you really need a

mop? An old t-shirt and a little elbow grease can keep your floors sparkling. You don't really need Windex; you can clean glass with ammonia and water. Do you really need a roll of paper towels? A dishrag and a hand washing rag might be enough. Do you really need Tidy Bowl when a small sprinkle of the Ajax you use to clean the sink will do just fine in the toilet?

The winner is the teen who gets all the items he or she needs to clean the apartment at the lowest cost. When you're done, ask the teens if they can see a way to beat even the lowest cost now that they've seen each teen's strategy.

Do Laundry Together

They may not admit it, but many teens are mystified by laundry. They don't read the care labels on their clothes, or they don't understand them. (And who among us hasn't put a wool sweater into the wash and seen it shrink five sizes, or turned our underwear blue by washing it with a new pair of jeans.)

For this exercise, actually take the teens to the Laundromat. (If possible, tell them you'll provide the quarters and detergent.)

Before you go, focus on a few key issues: sorting light from dark; the value of washing some items inside out, like jeans and sweaters; cold wash vs. warm or hot wash; and the use of fabric softener and bleach.

At the Laundromat go over this checklist:

- Laundry sorted into darks and lights
 - Teens have looked at the care tags for anything that looks delicate or special. If it requires dry cleaning, set it aside.
 - Use something like Shout to take out spot stains.
- Show teens how to load the washer, pointing out that if they stuff it to the brim clothes will not clean as well and be more wrinkled.
- Show teens how much detergent and softener to add, and which slot to put it in. Also, point out that using a Brand X will do just as good a job as brand name cleaners.

Talk about bleach (nowadays it's unnecessary for most clothes), but if you use it you have to be very careful not to ruin clothes with drips, etc.

When the clothes are washed, put them in the dryer. Show students that you can mix dark and light clothes in the dryer, but again you don't want to cram it full or your clothes will take too long to dry.

Bring along a few hangers so students can hang items that should not be dried. Point out that they can save money by line drying items like blankets or jeans that take a long time to dry. Show them how to hang or fold items so they won't get wrinkled.

When clothes are dry, have students remove them from the dryer.

Show the students how to fold basic items (shirts, slacks, sweaters.)

