Students practice being the “LEADER” of their own lives by discovering how they can gain more responsibility and “ENGAGEMENT.”

Blank or lined paper; Pencils or pens.
Total Prep Time: 5 mins.

As this is the third Monday of the month, please consider sharing or re-sharing the Monthly Kick-Off activity, and if appropriate, video at www.everymondaymatters.org. Additionally, a three-minute recap of the previous weeks may add extra context to this week and help connect the dots around the monthly theme.

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**GOALS FOR THE WEEK**

- Discover how we can earn the trust and respect of others while being a “LEADER”
- Identify ways to claim more control and independence in our own lives
- Practice “LEADING” and making positive changes by being an active citizen and role model in our own communities
- Understand how “LEADING A TEAM” is an important part of this month’s theme, “MONDAY GETS ENGAGED”
1) **SHARE THE NAME OF THIS ACTIVITY WITH STUDENTS: “TAKE THE REINS”**

2) **ASK 1-3 QUESTIONS FROM THE LIST BELOW TO WARM STUDENTS UP ON THE ACTIVITY’S FOCUS:**

   *NOTE: Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

   - **What does it mean to “TAKE THE REINS”?**
     - Answer: “TAKE THE REINS” means to be in control, be in charge, or be the “LEADER”
   - **In what areas of your life do you “TAKE THE REINS”?**
   - **Do you feel like you need permission from others, like teachers or family members, to “TAKE THE REINS” in different areas of your life?**
     - What are some of those areas?
     - Possible examples: Your choice in friends; extracurricular choices; clothing and hairstyle choices; preparing snacks; setting up playdates; etc.
   - **Do you ever feel like there are areas where you’re not allowed or able to “TAKE THE REINS”?**
     - What are some of those areas?
     - Possible examples: When and where you do homework; how you spend your free time; bedtime; curfew; TV choices; dinner options; etc.
   - **In what areas of life are you not yet comfortable “TAKING THE REINS” and still like help and support from family members or teachers?**
     - Possible examples: Cooking family meals; getting to school; waking up on time; signing up for extracurricular activities; planning and tracking activities on a calendar; etc.
   - **In what areas of your life would you like to “TAKE THE REINS” by making your own choices and acting more freely and independently on your own?**
     - Possible examples: Choosing weekend activities; planning family outings; adding or dropping an extracurricular; inviting a friend over for a weekday get together/playdate; etc.
   - **How can you start to take more ownership of your life to “ENGAGE” more with the people and experiences that bring you joy?**
   - **What are some things that might be helpful to do as you ask for more responsibility and ownership in your life?**
     - How can you share with others that you are ready to “TAKE THE REINS” in new parts of your life?
   - **What might it feel like to “TAKE THE REINS” to “ENGAGE” more with the people and experiences that bring you joy?**
   - **How might “TAKING THE REINS” in your life help you to “GET ENGAGED”?**
   - **Do you think “TAKING THE REINS” could help you connect with how much YOU MATTER?**

3) **SET UP THE “TAKE THE REINS” ACTIVITY:**

   - **Explain:**
     - Sometimes it can feel like kids and teenagers don’t have a lot of control over their lives
     - Even though you may feel ready to “TAKE THE REINS” in all areas of your life, sometimes it’s helpful to show others how or why you’re ready to do so
     - Today, you’re going to work together to brainstorm what you can control in your own life and discover some things you’re ready and willing to “TAKE THE REINS” on
     - Then, you’ll practice “LEADING” a conversation where you try to convince a parent or caregiver to give you more responsibility that will “ENGAGE” you with the experiences and/or people that bring you joy
• Ask:
  – How can you start to “LEAD” more of your own life to bring more joy and freedom into your life?
  – What activity or responsibility can you ask for that will help you “ENGAGE” more with the experiences and/or people that bring you joy?

4) START THE “TAKE THE REINS” ACTIVITY:
• Divide students into pairs and distribute paper and pencils to each student so they can take notes as helpful.
• Ask students to take 2-3 minutes to share with their partner what some of the things they control in their own lives are, and what some things are that they feel ready and want to “TAKE THE REINS” in.
• After they brainstorm together, explain:
  – Now that you have brainstormed some areas that you have control in and some areas that you want to “TAKE THE REINS” in, it’s time to practice how we can have a conversation to show that we’re ready for that new responsibility.
  – In pairs, you will practice having a conversation with a parent, teacher, or caregiver.
  – In this conversation, you will be asking—or better yet, persuading—you parent, teacher, or caregiver that you are ready for this new responsibility.
  – You and your partner will take turns role playing and practicing.
  – Your goal is to craft an effective argument and explain your reasoning for why you’re ready and excited to “TAKE THE REINS” in this new area of life, including explaining how this new experience or responsibility is going to be beneficial not just to you, but to both of you (and maybe even other people, as well).
  – Then, you will each give your partner constructive feedback and advice on how they can change their argument to truly persuade their parent, teacher, or caregiver.
• Share with students that practicing these conversations about “TAKING THE REINS” is a good way to practice their “LEADERSHIP” skills.
• Make sure students understand the instructions, and ask them to begin their role-playing conversations.
  – Remind students to role play or pretend that they are actually talking to their parent or caregiver, instead of simply brainstorming with their partner.
• Allow students up to 8 minutes to have these role-playing conversations and providing feedback to each other (about 3-4 minutes per student conversation and feedback).
• When time is up, ask for any volunteers to share out their experience and what they learned about “TAKE THE REINS”.

5) AFTER THE ACTIVITY, ASK 1-3 OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS REFLECT ON WHAT THEY’VE ACCOMPLISHED AND HOW THEY CAN TAKE THIS FORWARD:

*NOTE: Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.

• What was it like to prepare to “TAKE THE REINS” by practicing these conversations today?
• Was this activity challenging?
  – Why or why not?
• What was the most unexpected or important lesson you took away from this activity?
• How did this activity change your perspective on how you can “TAKE THE REINS” of your own life?
  – After this activity, do you think you are more likely to take ownership of your life and take the “LEAD” more often? How so?
  – Are you more likely to have conversations with authority figures to grant you the meaningful experiences and responsibilities that bring you joy? Why or why not?
• How did this activity prepare you to “TAKE THE REINS” more often in life?
• How might “TAKING THE REINS” help increase your confidence, optimism, and ownership in life?
• What did you learn about intentionally “ENGAGING” with others as a “LEADER”?
• How might “TAKING THE REINS” help you “GET ENGAGED” with more people in your community?
• How can “TAKING THE REINS” help you know that YOU MATTER?
6) Thank students for practicing “taking the reins” in their lives today. Remind students that “leadership” isn’t some big or scary thing, and that “leadership” can simply mean “taking the reins” of their lives instead of allowing others to “lead” for them.

7) Encourage students to build on what they learned today and to start taking steps to “take the reins” as appropriate in their own lives. Challenge students to find opportunities to take on a “leadership” role in their own life or in their family or community in a way that contributes to the world in a unique and powerful way.

8) Continue exploring how to “take the reins” and “lead a team” by “leading” one or more of the following extension ideas.

**Extension Ideas:**

**Do One or More of These Extension Ideas to Bring the Lesson from 15 Minutes to 30 Minutes or More.**

1) **Behind the Scenes:** Work with students to plan how they can become community or global “leaders” from behind the scenes. Students don’t have to like public speaking, being front and center, or other traditional “leadership” roles to create positive change. Remind them that they can influence the world from behind the scenes. Some examples of this are movie directors, artists, set designers, speech writers, authors, research scientists, etc. Have students write or draw out what they can do from behind the scenes to be a school, community, or global “leader” to make a positive impact in their life and the lives of others.

2) **Family Field Trip:** Challenge students to plan a (free) weekend activity or outing for their family. Instead of simply asking parents or caretakers to take them somewhere or do something with them, students plan and coordinate the details of a family field trip, including travel details, hours of admission (if any), and what day and time works for everyone.

3) **Break Free from Routine:** Since it is easy to feel like daily responsibilities and routines control their life, have students plan one new personal or family tradition that helps them take action to “engage” with the people and experiences that bring them a sense of joy, meaning, and purpose. Some examples can be morning meditation, playing board games before bed, waking up early for pancake breakfast every Monday, etc.

“Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple and that difficult.”

- Jim Rohn