

WHEN YOU GAZE INTO YOUR FUTURE, what do you see? Do you have a clear picture of what you'll be doing in a few years? Or is it more like trying to see the bottom of a muddy river?

Sometimes it's overwhelming to prepare for the future when you aren't even sure what's around the next bend. But don't stress. There are ways to prepare for whatever lies ahead even when you don't know what that might be.

Certain life skills—skills you can develop now—will help in almost any situation. They also tend to improve most areas of your life in sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle ways.

Keep an eye on the *New Era* for an ongoing discussion of these “Life Prep” skills. Bit by bit, you can become more prepared for whatever life throws at you! For this month, let's take a look at strengthening social skills.



PLAY “THE QUESTION GAME” with your family and close friends. Take turns asking get-to-know-you questions like, “When in your life did you laugh the hardest?” or “What's the most you've ever been surprised by a book or movie?” Be creative and try to get beyond the favorite-ice-cream-flavor type questions. Really get to know them.



PRACTICE HOLDING 30-MINUTE CONVERSATIONS with friends and relatives where nobody checks an electronic device the entire time.

TRY IT OUT!



ONE WAY TO SHOW INTEREST IS BY SPENDING TIME ON WHAT YOUR FRIENDS ENJOY.

For the *Strength of Youth*, says: “To have good friends, be a good friend. Show genuine interest in others” ([2011], 16). Try doing one activity a week with a friend or family member that's one of their favorite things, even if it's not something you'd normally be interested in.

SOCIAL SKILLS

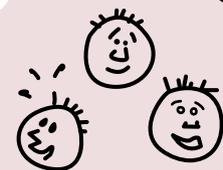
» The social skill set we're talking about has little to do with popularity. The type of social skills that truly improve your life are those that help you get to know other people on a deeper level and help you build real friendships.

These skills play a big role in school, church callings, dating, meeting your spouse, career, and pretty much everything else you do in life where you might encounter another living person. The best way to strengthen these skills is with a little practice.



SAY SOMETHING KIND, face-to-face, to 10 different people every day for a month.

SMILE AT 25 DIFFERENT PEOPLE a day for a month (or smile at everybody you meet if you don't see that many in a given day). Try to include a few strangers in the mix.



ANSWERS (from pages 40-41) **Brownie Battle:** Miguel wins, 5 games to 4. **Number Trek:** 110 (A=2, B=5, C=14, D=14, E=9, F=17, G=490). **Left or Right:** Both sides are equally dark. **Mystery Messages:** fast Sunday, mixed nuts, walk on water, double date, watch over the church, tree of life, turn over a new leaf, wave good-bye.