

The background of the entire cover is a deep purple. Overlaid on this is a large, semi-transparent image of a compass rose. The compass has a silver-colored metal frame and a black needle pointing towards the top-left. The face of the compass is white with black markings for degrees and cardinal directions (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW). A silver-colored pen is positioned diagonally across the top of the compass, with its tip pointing towards the top-left. The pen has a silver-colored barrel and a black grip.

LIVING SKILLS

Practical Guidance

EDUCATION

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK



Hazelden
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ABOVE AND BEYOND COUNSELING - HOUSTON, TX

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ABOVE AND BEYOND COUNSELING - HOUSTON, TX



AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION

Education includes all types of learning, from informal, such as what you learn from watching a video, to formal, such as attending vocational school or college. While informal learning happens for us even without thinking about it, formal education requires making decisions and taking action. It may seem like a big task. But formal education can make a huge difference in the kind of life you live. It can help you get jobs that earn more money and are more satisfying. It can open doors to opportunities.

Unfortunately, you may have had difficult experiences with formal education in the past. You may have dropped out of school, received poor grades, or been given negative messages about your ability to learn. This program is designed to help you re-engage in learning and begin to believe you can be a successful learner. It isn't the level of education that matters, but that you are setting education goals for yourself that will help you reach the dreams you have for your life.

THIS WORKBOOK IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR SESSIONS

SESSION 1 focuses on identifying the many things we learn every day, discusses the importance of learning, and examines the different ways of being smart.

SESSION 2 helps determine if getting more education makes sense for you and explores the different types of educational opportunities.

THIS WORKBOOK IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR SESSIONS

SESSION 3 focuses on how to get into an educational program and ways to pay for your education.

SESSION 4 focuses on the strategies that can help you become a successful learner.



SESSION 1.

Introduction to Learning

We are all life-long learners. Our brains are wired to learn. Learning is really about being open to life and being curious about the world we live in. In fact, we often learn things even when we're not aware of it. If you stop to think about it, you've probably learned something new very recently—maybe a new recipe, a piece of news on the radio, or a new song.

■ What are some things you have learned recently?

■ What are some things you would like to learn more about?

■ Why do you think it's important to be open to learning new things?

As we mentioned, sometimes people struggle with the more formal types of learning, such as going to school.

■ What has your experience with school been like in the past?

■ What struggles or obstacles did you face while going to school?

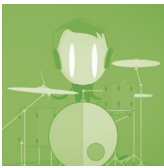
Sometimes people struggle with learning or the idea of going to school, because they don't think they are very smart, but the fact is there are many different ways to be smart. Here are some of those ways:



Art Smart – These people are very visual. They are often good at art, reading maps, doing puzzles, or seeing things in pictures. These people may be artists, architects, explorers, or photographers.



Body Smart – These people are usually very athletic or good with their hands. They like moving and making things. These people may be athletes, dancers, mechanics, or construction workers.



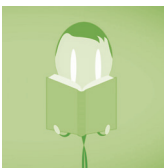
Music Smart – These people love to listen to and play music. These people may be musicians, disc jockeys, piano tuners, or music teachers.



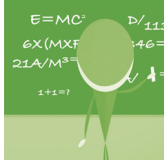
People Smart – These people are very good with other people, usually have lots of friends, and care about people. These people may be teachers, managers, nurses, or salespeople.



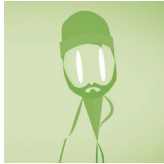
Self Smart – These people tend to know themselves very well and are very aware of what they are thinking and feeling. These people may be counselors or therapists.



Word Smart – These people are very good with words. They like reading, writing, playing word games, or telling stories. These people may be writers, librarians, or lawyers.



Math Smart – These people are very good with numbers and thinking logically. These people may be bookkeepers, accountants, computer programmers, or scientists.



Nature Smart – These people like to be outdoors in nature and know a lot about the natural world. These people may be forest rangers, landscape architects, or biologists.

Match the way of being smart with the following examples:

Art Smart

Cory loves to read and write. It seems like he is always reading a book, the newspaper, or online blogs.

Body Smart

Darlene is always drawing pictures on restaurant napkins, in her school notebooks, or in her journal. She loves to work on art projects as well.

Music Smart

Priscilla is always bouncing a basketball around in her apartment and plays pickup basketball whenever she gets the chance. She is a star player on the court.

People Smart

Carlos loves to go fishing with his uncle. If Carlos could be outside at the lake every day, that's what he would do. He knows all about fish, bait, and fishing equipment.

Self Smart

Nasra loves to keep a journal of all her thoughts and feelings. She loves to think about life and how she feels about things.

Word Smart

Kee loves to be around people and has many friends. He is a real leader and people come to him to talk about their problems. He is good at helping them.

Math Smart

Ahmed learned to play the piano when he was really young. He now plays in a band and makes money on the side teaching others how to play piano too.

Nature Smart

Patti is the keeper of the family checkbook, and she keeps track of all the bills and her family's budget. She enjoys doing this.

The correct answers are listed at the end of this session.

■ It is possible to be smart in more than one of these ways. In which of these ways do you think you are smart?

It doesn't matter what kind of student you were in the past. We all have the ability to learn and to be smart in our own ways. Once you realize this, you can begin to set learning goals that can help you reach the dreams you have for your life.

■ What is one learning goal you have for your life?

■ What dream would this learning goal help you achieve?

SUMMARY

- You learn many different things every day.
- Learning is important in helping you reach your dreams.
- There are many different ways of being smart.

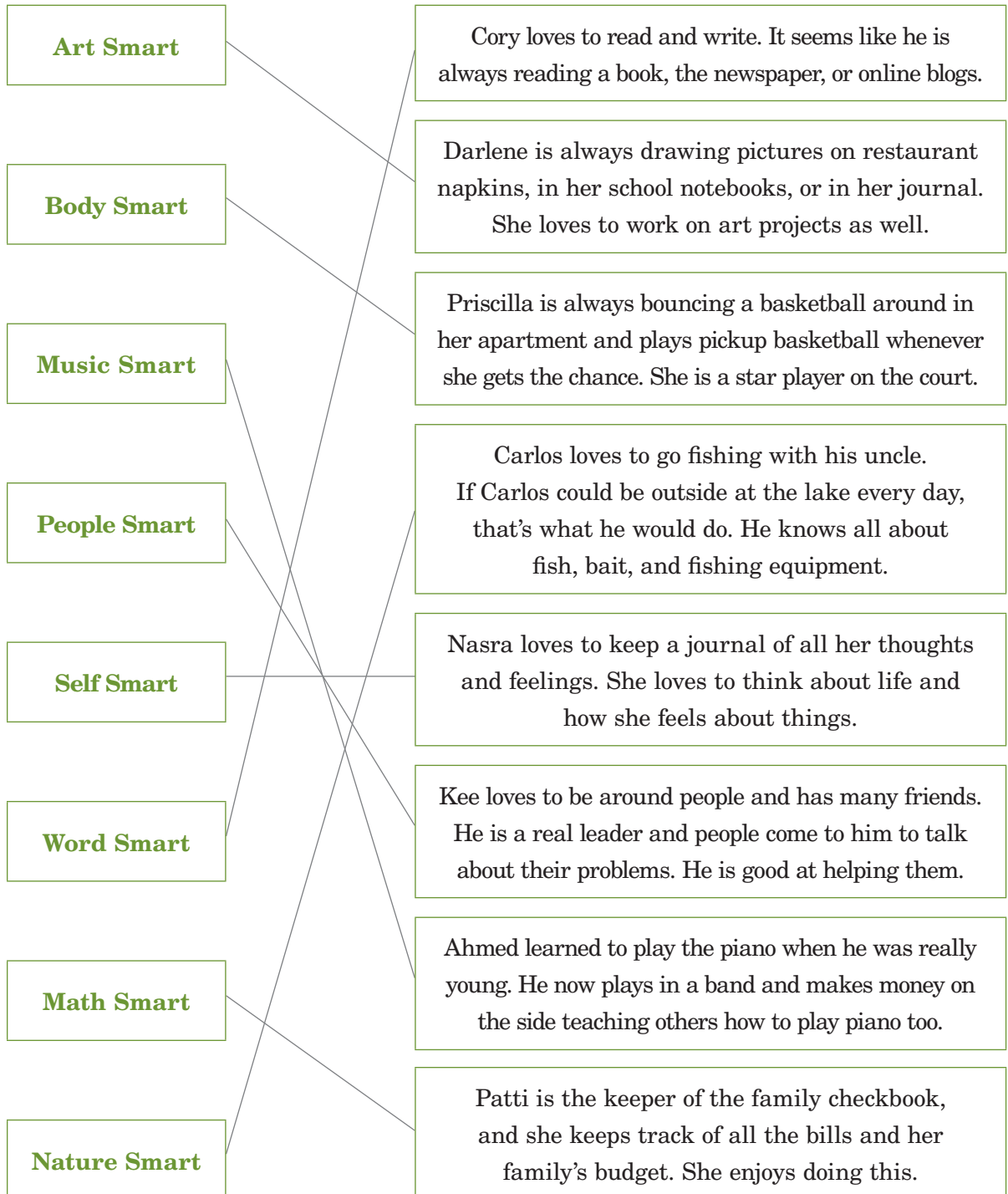
CHALLENGE

Talk to two or three friends or family members to find out a skill or talent they have learned. In what ways are they smart?

ANSWER KEY

(page 7)

Match the way of being smart with the following examples:





SESSION 2.

Deciding to Get an Education

We're all learners. We're learning new things all the time. We can learn things by watching videos, reading books, watching people who are good at something, volunteering, doing internships, or getting on-the-job training. But sometimes it makes sense to go to school to learn things.

■ What do you think are some of the benefits of going to school?

Fatima had been interested in medicine since she was a little girl. When people used to ask her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she would say, "a nurse." Her parents loved her, but they didn't encourage her goal. They had very little money and had never been to college, so they didn't think Fatima needed to go.

Fatima dropped out of high school and had a child when she was seventeen. She found a job and supported herself and her son. When her son was old enough to go out on his own, she thought again about her dream to be a nurse. She looked into what it would take for her to realize this dream. continued ►





First she would have to get her GED, and then apply to a nursing program. She discovered there were several kinds of programs she could take. She could become an LPN (licensed practical nurse) by going to a vocational or technical college. It would take her a year or two. She would not earn as much money as an RN (registered nurse), but her education wouldn't take her as long either. She decided she would get her LPN and maybe get her RN later. So she applied to a vocational college.

Like Fatima, you have many different types of educational programs to choose from. Here are some examples:

GED



A test that is the equivalent of a high school diploma.

Geared to people who have not finished high school.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)



Classes for people to learn how to speak English.

VOCATIONAL OR TECHNICAL COLLEGE



These schools often focus on training for jobs that require specific skills, such as electricians, plumbers, nurse's aides, Web designers, etc.

COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY



These schools offer two-year or four-year degrees that prepare you for a variety of careers.

ONLINE DEGREES



These programs can be at the vocational/technical college or college/university levels. Students take all or part of a class online.

CERTIFICATES OR LICENSES



These are earned by going through a program or passing a test that proves expertise in a certain area, for instance, a fitness trainer.

■ What careers are you interested in?

■ What type of schooling is needed for these careers?

■ If you don't know, you could talk to someone who has this type of career.
Who could you talk to?

One way to find out what type of educational program is best for you is to go to a local job center. You can find the name, address, and phone number for a job center near you by looking online at www.servicelocator.org. People at these job centers can help answer questions about what school is right for you.

If you decide to go to school and you have chosen the type of school you need to go to, it's useful to answer some questions about which school you want to attend. Think about what you want your educational experience to be like. Answer the following questions:

■ I want a (big, small) school. _____

■ I want a program that lasts (how long). _____

■ I want a program that's flexible enough to let me work (full-time, part-time).

■ I want a school within (what distance) of my home. _____

■ I need a school that I can reach by (driving, public transportation, walking).

■ Other: _____

■ The school that makes sense for me is: _____

Going back to school, whether it's for vocational training or to a general two- or four-year college, can feel like a big challenge. Still, many programs offer support to help you be successful, and the payoff is big. How much more do you think a college graduate usually earns in a year, compared to someone with a high school degree?

_____ \$2,000 _____ \$4,500 _____ \$7,000 _____ \$12,000–\$17,000

Studies have shown that a person who went to college earns about \$12,000 to \$17,000 a year more than a person who graduated from high school. That adds up to about \$450,000 more in a lifetime. A typical graduate of a vocational or technical college may earn almost as much as a typical college graduate.

Imagine what your life would be like if you went back to school. Write words below that describe what you imagine. They might be words that describe your feelings, what your life would be like, or how it will affect others in your life.

SUMMARY

- Going to school can be beneficial in a number of ways.
- There are many different types of educational programs to choose from.
- Help in selecting an educational program is available at www.servicelocator.org.

CHALLENGE

Talk with some people who have a job that you are interested in. Ask them what type of education they needed in order to get that job.



SESSION 3.

Starting Your Education

People go back to school as adults for different reasons. It may be for personal satisfaction. It may be for a better job and more money. If you decide that going back to school is the right thing for you, there are steps you will need to take to get into a school or program.

If you want to get your GED or attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, check with your local school district to see what programs are available and how to sign up.

If you want to attend a vocational/technical college or college/university, here are some steps to follow to get your education started:

- **Schedule a visit to the school.** It really helps to visit the school to help you decide if it is the right place for you. Many schools offer tours. Check with the school's admissions office.
- **Meet with someone in admissions.** You can make an appointment to talk about the school and ask questions with an admissions counselor.
- **Fill out an admission application.** You can ask to have an application mailed to you, you can pick one up, or you may be able to complete one online. The school's website will have information about its application process. If you have been in school before, you may also have to send in a transcript from every school you attended, along with your application. A transcript is a record of the classes you took and the grades you received. You can call schools you've attended to get transcripts.
- **Apply for financial aid.** Meet with someone in the school's financial aid or student services office to give you guidance.
- **Meet with an advisor.** Educational programs often have advisors who will help you figure out what classes you need to take and how to schedule them.
- **Register for classes.** Choose classes that you find interesting and that will meet the requirements of your degree or program.

- **Buy your textbooks.** Usually when you take a class, you need to buy textbooks or other course materials. Sometimes you can find used books or even rent books. Check to see if the school has a bookstore where required course materials are available.
- **Optional: Check out where your classes are located before they start.** If you are new to a school, you may want to go there before your first day of classes, just to see where your classes are being held. That way you won't get lost or be late on your first day.

When you are ready to get your education started, fill out this chart. Write in dates when you will do each task. When the task is completed, put a check mark in the Done column.

TASK	WHEN I WILL DO IT	DONE
<i>Schedule a visit to the school.</i>		
<i>Meet with someone in admissions.</i>		
<i>Fill out an admission application.</i>		
<i>Apply for financial aid.</i>		
<i>Meet with an advisor.</i>		
<i>Register for classes.</i>		
<i>Buy my textbooks.</i>		
<i>Check out where my classes are located.</i>		

Money is a big issue for anyone who is going back to school, but there is financial aid available. Here are some examples:

- **Federal and state government aid programs.** They are based on financial need.
- **Grants and scholarships.** These are based on both need and merit (meaning your past grades, life experience, or talents).
- **Student loans.** Some loans don't have to be paid back until you graduate, and some have low interest rates (meaning it costs less to borrow the money).

- **Military programs.** If you have been in the military, there are several ways to get help paying for school.
- **AmeriCorps.** This federal program helps pay for schooling while a person is working for the government.
- **Work-study programs.** These are jobs you can get at the school you go to.

Check with your school's financial aid or student services office for more information. You can also learn about financial aid online. One helpful website is www.actstudent.org/finaid/types.html.

Some people don't want to have any school debt, so they take classes as they can pay for them. It may take longer to finish school, but it is an option. Some people do this by planning ahead and saving money for school. Others work while they are going to school. Also some companies will help pay for a portion of tuition costs for employees. Check to see if your employer has such a program.

Find out how much tuition, student fees, textbooks, and other school expenses will cost. Then use this budget to determine how much money you will need to go to school. (Some of the following categories may not apply to the program you choose.)

SCHOOL COSTS	
<i>Tuition</i>	
<i>Student fees</i>	
<i>Textbooks</i>	
<i>Living expenses</i> <i>(if you are living on campus)</i>	
<i>Food</i> <i>(if you are using a school's meal plan)</i>	
<i>Other</i>	
Total Costs:	

RESOURCES	
<i>Savings</i>	
<i>Income from your job</i>	
<i>Other</i>	
Total Resources:	

■ What I need in financial aid (subtract Total Resources from Total Costs):



At first Fatima panicked when she saw she was going to need \$5,000 to complete her LPN program. But she went to the financial aid office at the vocational college she hoped to attend, and they helped her figure out the financing. She had saved \$1,000. She got a federal grant of \$2,000 and took out a student loan of \$2,000.

Don't panic about the money. Take some time to figure it out. Ask for help if you need it. There are many ways to pay for school.



Fatima was thirty-five years old when she went back to school to get her nursing degree. She was forty-two years old when she went back again for her RN degree. She was never sorry about this decision. She loved being a nurse. And it gave her more money to buy a house and to help her son with his dreams.

SUMMARY

- The steps to getting your education started include scheduling a visit to a school, meeting with someone in admissions, filling out an application, applying for financial aid, meeting with an advisor, registering for classes, buying textbooks, and checking out where classes are located.
- Several types of financial aid are available, including government aid, grants and scholarships, student loans, military programs, AmeriCorps, and work-study programs.

CHALLENGE

Talk to someone who went back to school as an adult. Ask that person what the process was to get into school and what kinds of financial aid were used to pay for it.



SESSION 4.

Becoming a Successful Learner

Going back to school can be both exciting and stressful.

■ What excites you about going back to school?

■ What makes you feel stressed about going back to school?

Depending on what kind of educational program you choose, you may have to get back into the groove of studying. If you were the kind of student who never studied, then you may have to develop study habits for the first time. Here are some tips for starting:

■ Set aside a regular time for studying. When will you study?

- Give yourself a reward for studying. What will your reward be?

- Create a study space—maybe a corner of the kitchen table, a desk in your bedroom, the library, a coffee shop, or a different place. Where will your study place be?

Here are some other tips to help you become a successful learner:



Mark important school dates on your calendar. When are papers due? When do you need to take tests? When do you need to register for the next round of classes?



Listen and take good notes in class. How will you take notes—with a pencil and notebook or on a laptop or tablet?



Get help if you need it. Where will you get help? A tutor? Ask questions of the teacher? Take a study skills class?



Build a support system. Who will you ask to be in your support system? Could you join a study group, for example?



Plan to keep yourself healthy and balanced. What will you do to accomplish this?

Going back to school can make a huge difference in your ability to support yourself and your family members. Still, it is a big decision. Consider it carefully—the type of schooling you want, how you’ll pay for it, and how you’ll prepare yourself to be a successful learner. Remember, there are many resources to help you all along the way.

■ List here the key skills you learned in this program that will help you reach your educational goals.

SUMMARY

- Strategies that will help you be successful in school include setting aside a regular time for studying, giving yourself a reward for studying, and creating a study space.
- Other tips for becoming a successful learner include marking important school dates on your calendar, listening and taking good notes in class, getting help if you need it, building a support system, and keeping yourself healthy and balanced.

CHALLENGE

Choose one or two study skills you learned in this session and put them into practice.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

Career Colleges and Technical Schools—Questions to Ask Before Enrolling

www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/questions.html

For people preparing to go to school, this website provides questions to ask regarding finding and choosing a school and paying for an education.

Paying for Your Education

www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/paying.html

This U.S. Department of Education website discusses how to pay for an education and includes links to financial aid and grant applications.

FinAid: The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid

www.finaid.org

This site is a comprehensive source for student financial aid information, advice, and tools.

Returning to School as an Adult

www.iseek.org/education/return-to-school.html

Are you ready to go back to school? This website includes lists of factors that anyone should consider.

NOTE: *Otherwise, much of this site is designed specifically for adult learners in Minnesota.*

Five Tips for Going Back to School as an Adult

www.adulted.about.com/od/intro/tp/going-back-to-school.htm

The five tips discussed on this site are: get financial help; balance work, family, and school; manage test anxiety; get your forty winks; and find a support system.