Life Skills: 
Self Responsibility, Leadership

What to Do: 
Interpret the meanings of sayings common to U.S. and others’ cultures

Measuring Success: 
Youths compare their own values to those expressed in popular sayings.

Audience: 
7th - 12th grades

Time Involved: 
15 – 30 minutes

Group Size: 
2 – 20

Preparation and Materials 
Copies of the “Sayings & Expressions” activity sheet.

Introduction 
Sayings are another way that we reveal our underlying beliefs. Sayings, like symbols, show cultural prejudices, ethics, and standards of behavior. We’re going to look at some different sayings and discuss how what we say reveals what we think about different peoples’ value systems.

The Activity 
1. Pass out the handout of the sayings or write them on a large chart.
2. Have youths interpret the U.S. sayings.
3. Discuss the underlying values of the sayings. Do youths agree with them? Why or why not?
4. Ask youths to list some sayings they have heard. Discuss what they mean.
5. Once the group has mastered the U.S. sayings, have them work on the international sayings.
6. Do the international sayings reflect the cultures they come from? Have any of the values become outdated? Have new ones taken their place? (Adapted from Robert Kohls, Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross Cultural Training, Methodologies, p. 159 SiETAR, 1979)
Reflect/Discuss
Share What You Did
Did everyone in your group agree with the sayings and expressions?
Did you find more than one reasonable way to interpret each saying?

Tell What’s Important
How are the international sayings and expressions similar or different than American sayings?
How do sayings relate to an individual’s values?

Generalize to Your Life
Which sayings do you like most?
Are you open to values that are different, perhaps even opposite, of yours?
Should your values be more rigid? Why or why not?

Apply
Share the activity sheets with others. Lead them through the Reflect/Discuss questions.

More Challenges
- Become an international pen pal. Be aware of how your pen pal uses phrases and expressions.
- Look up additional sayings from this country and abroad. Discuss their meaning.
- Make up some special saying that reflects your group’s values.
- Make a scrapbook of sayings. Share it with family members and friends.
- Compare the sayings of your grandparents and parents and yourself. Do they have the same meaning?
Sayings and Expressions Work Sheet 1

Interpret these sayings. Write your response on the lines.

1. Cleanliness is next to godliness.
   ____________________________________________________________

2. Time is money.
   ____________________________________________________________

3. A woman’s place is in the home.
   ____________________________________________________________

4. Little children should be seen, not heard.
   ____________________________________________________________

5. A penny saved is a penny earned.
   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

7. Don’t cry over spilt milk.
   ____________________________________________________________

8. Waste not, want not.
   ____________________________________________________________

9. Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.
   ____________________________________________________________

10. God helps those who help themselves.
   ____________________________________________________________

11. It’s not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.
    ____________________________________________________________

12. A man’s home is his castle.
    ____________________________________________________________

13. No rest for the wicked.
    ____________________________________________________________

14. You made your bed, now sleep in it.
    ____________________________________________________________
Sayings and Expressions Work Sheet 2

Interpret these sayings from other countries. Write your response on the lines. Compare them with U.S. sayings.

1. It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. – Chinese proverb

2. An empty stomach will not listen to anything. – Spanish proverb

3. The hardest work is to go idle. – Yiddish proverb

4. It is a long lane that has no turning. – English proverb

5. Ceremony is the smoke of friendships. – Chinese proverb

6. Measure a thousand times and cut once. – Turkish proverb

7. Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing is so gentle as real strength. – Indian proverb
Sayings and Expressions Work Sheet Answers

Worksheet #1

Saying #1: Value is cleanliness.
Saying #2: Value is thriftiness.
Saying #3: Value is in keeping women in one kind of situation.
Saying #4: Value is keeping children quiet and obedient.
Saying #5: Value is thriftiness.
Saying #6: Value is guilt by association.
Saying #7: Value is don’t dwell on mistakes, bad luck or the past.
Saying #8: Value is frugality.
Saying #9: Value is diligence.
Saying #10: Value is initiative.
Saying #11: Value is sportsmanship.
Saying #12: Value is privacy, importance of property.
Saying #13: Value is guilt, work ethic.
Saying #14: Value is responsibility for one’s actions.

Worksheet #2

Saying #1: Value is charity, giving.
Saying #2: Message is about the impact hunger has on people.
Saying #3: Value is the importance of work.
Saying #4: Value is the importance of change.
Saying #5: Value is to separate the protocol of relationships from their true meaning.
Saying #6: Value is cautiousness.
Saying #7: Value is the importance of gentleness, not physical power.