



Facilitator Guide

2022

Introduction

Incoming college students face many emotional challenges in their first year. In partnership with Text, Talk, Act, The Jed Foundation (JED) has created a free activity to help them build resilience, find ways to reach out for help, learn how to help others, and develop self-care strategies. These life skills can have an immediate impact on students' ability to cope with and navigate the challenges that can arise throughout their first year.

How Text, Talk, Ready Set Go Works

Text, Talk, Ready Set Go combines text messaging with small group and large group discussion so that first-year students can connect and start developing these important skills. In just three sessions, students will build peer relationships and walk away with strategies they can use throughout their time in college and during any life transition.

Where It Works

This activity works well in resident hall/floor discussions, first-year college student classes, orientations or other first-year group settings.

About the Guide

This facilitator guide will walk you through how to deliver the three sessions to first-year college students. It is designed for Residence Assistants, College Faculty, Orientation leaders and others who work with first-year college students.

The guide is broken into the following sections:

- I. Text, Talk, Ready Set Go Session Content
- II. Activity Plan, Session 1: Resilience
- III. Activity Plan, Session 2: Help-Giving and Help-Seeking Behaviors
- IV. Activity Plan, Session 3: Self-Care Strategies
- V. Facilitation Tips
- VI. Troubleshooting the Text Messaging Platform

Text, Talk, Ready Set Go Session Content

Text, Talk, Ready Set Go is intended to be divided into three 50-minute sessions. Each session has a unique theme. The first part of each session is meant to be conducted in small groups of 3-4 students with one cell phone. Students will text into the platform and receive a series of pre-programmed text messages to guide them through the session's small group discussion. The second part of each session is meant to be facilitator-led as a large group.

The three session themes are:

1. Resilience
2. Help-Giving and Help-Seeking Behaviors
3. Self-Care Strategies

Activity Plan

Session 1: Resilience

This activity plan is designed to help the facilitator lead first-year college students in the Text, Talk, Ready Set Go Resilience activity (session 1 of 3).

Activity Plan

1. Introduce Text, Talk, Ready Set Go

3 minutes

- › **SAY:** Today we are going to do an activity called Text, Talk, Ready Set Go. This was created by The Jed Foundation, a nonprofit that protects emotional health and prevents suicide for the nation's teens and young adults.

Text, Talk, Ready Set Go was created to help first-year college students prepare emotionally for the transition year. This activity will be done over the period of three sessions.

The learning outcomes of all three sessions of Text, Talk, Ready Set Go include: (*download optional PPT slide deck [here](#)*)

- Finding ways to build resilience and develop a growth mindset
- Finding and building community
- Establishing healthy relationships
- Finding ways to seek help
- Finding ways to give help to others
- Utilizing self-care strategies to take care of your wellbeing

Today's activity will focus on the first three learning outcomes (resilience, building community, and healthy relationships). In a couple of minutes, you will text into a text messaging platform to receive a series of discussion questions that will help you talk about what resilience means to you and how to help build resilience.

After the text messaging activity, we will continue the discussion as a large group.

There are two more sessions of Text, Talk, Ready Set Go, which covers help-giving and help-seeking and self-care themes. Next time we meet, we will do the second session.

2. Small Group Text Messaging Activity

20 minutes

- › **SAY:** In just a minute, I'd like you to divide into groups of 3 or 4 (*ALTERNATIVELY, assign groups*). If you have your cell phone with you, please take it out now.
- › **SHOW:** Cell Phone How-To Graphic (*download PPT slide deck [here](#)*)



- › **SAY:** Go into your text messages and start a new text. In the “TO:” section, you will type in the phone number 1-833-440-2220. In the message section, where you would type, “how are you?” you are going to type the word READY and hit send. So, you are texting READY to 1-833-440-2220.

You’ll get a text message back that says, ‘Welcome to Text, Talk, Ready Set Go! Grab a couple of your classmates and reply PEER to begin.’ See how the word PEER is in all caps? That is your keyword. You are going to type the keyword in to get the next text message. So, in this case, type PEERS (it doesn’t have to be in all caps when you reply, it just has to be spelled correctly) and hit send.

- › **ASK:** Can someone read the next text out loud?
- › **ASK:** What is the keyword to get the next text message?

(answer is: FIGURE)

- › **SAY:** Throughout the activity, your group will receive a series of preprogrammed text messages that include discussion questions, videos, assessment questions and other interactions. Do what each text says, then enter the keyword for the next text message. Got it?

Now we are going to get into groups of 3-4. In your group, pick one person to have the phone. That person is going to read the text message to the group, give the group time to talk about it (and make sure everyone gets a chance to answer) and then move to the next text message.

Sometimes you will receive two text messages at a time. These might come in out of order. Be sure to read the one labeled 1 of 2 before the one labeled 2 of 2.

This part of the activity will take you about 20 minutes. I will bring you back at that time for the large group activity.

Any questions? Ok, please get into your groups and begin.

3. Large Group Activity

25 minutes

After 20 minutes, bring students back together and invite the group to continue the discussion together.

Start the large group activity by asking the following general questions. If a student provides an answer that resonates with others, or that others seem to want to build upon, feel free to utilize the facilitation tips on page 10 to help guide the conversation.

- › **ASK:**
 - How did the text messaging activity go?
 - What stood out to you?
 - Did you hear anything surprising?
 - What was something new that you learned?

Next, ask the following specific questions. These questions will help to reiterate the content of the small group text messaging activity and will help students dig a little deeper:

- › **ASK:**
 - What challenges might arise in your first year here that you or others may need to learn from or use to practice resilience?
 - **DISCUSS** with participants
 - Have each participant **TEXT CHALLENGE** to 833-440-2220 to answer a multiple choice question on challenges
 - Pick a few of the identified challenges and for each challenge, **ASK:**
 - If you faced [XYZ challenge], what could you do to bounce back and build resiliency? Who could you turn to for support? What would help you to overcome the challenge?
 - How can a growth mindset, versus a fixed mindset, help people to overcome challenges?
 - We're all new here. Where can you go to meet new people and find community?
 - When, in your life, have you had to learn how to clearly communicate your needs and establish boundaries with another person?
 - **DISCUSS** with participants
 - Have each participant **TEXT ESTABLISH** to 833-440-2220 to answer a multiple choice question on boundaries
 - Pick a few of the identified boundary scenarios and for each scenario, **ASK:**
 - If you faced [XYZ scenario], how could you establish boundaries?
 - **SHARE:** If you or someone you know struggles to communicate openly and honestly with others, here are some tips to get started:

1. Sharing parts of yourself and being excited about what others can share with you will create new paths for your friendships and connections.
 2. Be honest about your self-care needs. Take time for yourself, your friends, or your partner. Find a balance.
 3. Set aside time to speak with each other about your preferred communication styles.
 4. Make a list of what communication in relationships looks like for you. Is it texting every day? Regular phone calls?
- o **ASK:** When, in your life, did you find yourself in an unhealthy relationship? What did it look like? (*ALTERNATIVELY, share an example from your life or someone you know who was in an unhealthy relationship, then ask the next question*)
 - For each answer, **ASK:** what are some ways someone could communicate how they feel and set healthy boundaries if they found themselves in that situation?

4. Closing Activity

2 minutes

- › **SAY:** Thank you all for your participation today. I know some of this stuff isn't easy to talk about, but finding ways to build resiliency, develop a growth mindset, and create healthy relationships through communication and boundary setting will help you now and in the future. Next time we meet, we will continue this conversation. In the meantime, don't be afraid to use the challenges you may face during the transition as an opportunity to practice building resilience. This time in your life can be hard, but the community you start to build can be a great space for you to find comfort and grow.

Activity Plan

Session 2: Help-Giving and Help-Seeking Behaviors

This activity plan is designed to help the facilitator lead first-year college students in the Text, Talk, Ready Set Go Help-Giving and Help-Seeking activity (session 2 of 3).

Activity Plan

2. Introduce the Session

3 minutes

- › **SAY:** Last time we met, we talked about resilience. You shared a lot of strategies with each other and worked together to help find ways to maintain your identity, set boundaries, and make your relationships healthier.

The learning outcomes of today's session include:

- i. Finding ways to seek help
- ii. Finding ways to give help to others

Just like last time, we will use the text messaging platform and small groups for the first portion of today's activity, and then continue the discussion as a large group.

2. Small Group Text Messaging Activity

20 minutes

- › **SAY:** Let's go ahead and get into your small groups (*ALTERNATIVELY, reassign groups*). Go into your text messages and start a new text. In the TO: section, you will type in the phone number 1-833-440-2220. In the message section, you are going to type the word SEEK and hit send. So, you are texting SEEK to 1-833-440-2220.
- › **ASK:** Can someone read the text out loud?
- › **ASK:** What is the keyword to get the next text message?

(answer is: GIVE)

- › **SAY:** Just like last time, you'll have 20 minutes for the texting activity. I will bring you back at that time for the large group activity.

Any questions? Ok, please begin.

3. Large Group Activity

25 minutes

After 20 minutes, bring students back together and invite the group to continue the discussion together.

Start the large group activity by asking the following general questions. If a student provides an answer that resonates with others, or that others seem to want to build upon, feel free to utilize the facilitation tips on page 10 to help guide the conversation.

- › **ASK:**
 - How did the text messaging activity go?
 - What stood out to you?
 - Did you hear anything surprising?
 - What was something new that you learned?

Next, ask the following specific questions. These questions will help to reiterate the content of the small group text messaging activity and will help students to dig a little deeper:

- › **ASK:**
 - What do you do when you feel stressed?
 - **DISCUSS** with participants
 - Have each participant **TEXT HANDLE** to 833-440-2220 to answer a multiple choice question on how they handle stress
 - What are some signs that indicate it's time to reach out for help?
 - **ANSWERS** should include:
 - Missing school or work
 - Avoiding certain tasks
 - Arguments with friends/family are happening more than usual
 - Having thoughts about harming yourself in order to cope with your struggles
 - Who would you turn to if you needed help or support?
 - Have participants **WRITE** down the names of three people they would turn to
 - **DISCUSS** with participants
 - Have each participant **TEXT WHO** to 833-440-2220 to answer a multiple choice question on who they turn to for help
 - What if you reached out to someone, but they didn't help?
 - *Note to facilitator:* In some cases when an individual reaches out for help, the person they reach out to is unavailable. When this happens, they should try not to be discouraged. It helps for students to have a list of possible family, friends, and trusted adults they can reach out to whenever they are struggling emotionally. We encourage students to keep trying--reaching out for help is always a good thing. There are people who are willing and want to help.

- o If you were concerned about a friend, how would you approach them? What would you do/say?
- o What if they said nothing was wrong, but you were pretty sure something was wrong and still felt concerned? What would you do?
- o How can we help someone that continuously says they don't want help?

4. Closing Activity

2 minutes

- › **SAY:** Thank you again for your participation today. I commend you for being open and honest about this stuff. Next time we meet, we will dig deeper into self-care strategies. In the meantime, please continue to look out for yourself and others.

Activity Plan

Session 3: Self-Care Strategies

This activity plan is designed to help the facilitator lead first-year college students in the Text, Talk, Ready Set Go Self-Care activity (session 3 of 3).

Activity Plan

3. Introduce the Session

3 minutes

- › **SAY:** Today is the last session of Text, Talk, Ready Set Go!

The learning outcomes of today's session is:

- i. Utilizing self-care strategies to take care of your wellbeing

Again, we will use the text messaging platform and small groups for the first portion of today's activity, and then continue the discussion as a large group.

2. Small Group Text Messaging Activity

20 minutes

- › **SAY:** Let's go ahead and get into your small groups (*ALTERNATIVELY, reassign groups*). Go into your text messages and start a new text. In the TO: section, you will type in the phone number 1-833-440-2220. In the message section, you are going to type the word SELF and hit send. So, you are texting SELF to 1-833-440-2220.
- › **ASK:** Can someone read the text out loud?
- › **ASK:** What is the keyword to get the next text message?

(answer is: YOU)

- › **SAY:** Just like last time, you'll have 20 minutes for the texting activity. I will bring you back at that time for the large group activity.

Any questions? Ok, please begin.

3. Large Group Activity

25 minutes

After 20 minutes, bring students back together and invite the group to continue the discussion together.

Start the large group activity by asking the following general questions. If a student provides an answer that resonates with others, or that others seem to want to build upon, feel free to utilize the facilitation tips on page 10 to help guide the conversation.

- › **ASK:**
 - How did the text messaging activity go?
 - What stood out to you?
 - Did you hear anything surprising?
 - What was something new that you learned?

Next, ask the following specific questions. These questions will help to reiterate the content of the small group text messaging activity and will help students to dig a little deeper:

- › **ASK:**
 - What are your go-to self-care strategies?
 - **DISCUSS** with participants
 - Have each participant **TEXT STRATEGY** to 833-440-2220) for a multiple choice question on self-care
 - What are emotional and cognitive signs of stress?
 - *ANSWERS should include:*
 - Memory problems
 - Constant worrying
 - Negative self-talk
 - Moodiness or irritability
 - Depression, sadness, and/or general unhappiness
 - What are some physical signs of stress?
 - *ANSWERS should include:*
 - Aches and pains (ex: stomachache)
 - Frequent colds/sickness
 - Rapid heartbeat
 - Trouble breathing
 - Sweating when not physically active
 - How can self-care strategies help relieve stress?
 - What if you try self-care strategies, but still feel stressed? What can you do?
 - Think back to a time when you were feeling really stressed. What helped you to feel better? What didn't help?
 - How can a growth mindset help when faced with stress?
 - How can communicating your needs and establishing boundaries help when faced with stress?

4. Closing Activity

2 minutes

- › **SAY:** Thank you again for your participation in these activities. Please continue to find ways to build resiliency, manage stress, help yourself and others, and utilize self-care strategies as you go through your first year here.

Facilitation Tips

1. BEFORE the activity: Mentally and physically prepare yourself as the facilitator

Be sure to thoroughly review this facilitator guide including the large group activity questions ahead of time. Try out the text messaging platform so that you understand how it works (text READY to 1-833-440-2220).

Make sure you are well rested and focused on creating a positive state of mind, for a successful outcome. As a facilitator, you can set the tone of the activity by helping to energize the group and by helping to make them feel comfortable.

2. BEFORE the activity: Consider the environment

Text, Talk, Ready Set Go works best in rooms with lots of space to spread out (especially for the small group activity). Rooms with natural daylight and tables that can easily be rearranged work well for keeping the group comfortable. If possible, offer snacks and drinks during the activities (even offering hard candy like Life Savers work well and help with the activity theme).

3. DURING the activity: Communicate Learning Outcomes

Use the “Learning Outcomes” section of each activity in the facilitator guide to establish and articulate expected learning outcomes for the group.

4. DURING the activity: Manage Participation

Some participants will be more talkative than others. These participants can help to get the conversation going, but as the facilitator, be sure to give room and opportunity for the quiet participants to engage. You can say things like, “there are a few of you we haven’t heard from, and I’d love to hear your response to this question,” or “does anyone else have something they would like to add?” Note: don’t force people to answer questions if they are not ready or uncomfortable. This is a new space for everyone and we want to extend as much grace and time to those that may need it during the transition.

Allow for awkward silence after you ask a question. As the name implies, it may feel awkward, but the good news is, participants don’t like awkward silences either. In no time, someone will speak up to help fill that awkward silence.

5. DURING the activity: Stay on Track

Be sure to stay on track with the activity timing breakdown. You may need to move the group along at times to get them into the small group and large group activities. During the large group activity, make sure the conversation stays on topic. If you feel the group getting off topic, bring it back around by asking the question again or saying, “I want to be respectful of everyone’s time. Let’s go back to discussing XYZ.”

Troubleshooting the Text Messaging Platform

- › ___ The keywords are NOT case sensitive.
- › ___ It sometimes takes a few seconds for a text to come through, just as it does when texting a friend.
- › ___ If students don't get the next question, have them type the keyword again and be sure it is spelled correctly and is the first word in the text.
- › ___ If students get a message that isn't about the first year of college, they typed the wrong keyword at the beginning of your message. Have them go back to the last text that was on topic and type the keyword given there again.
- › ___ Most of Text, Talk, Ready Set Go works fine on any phone, but there are a few links that work only on smart phones.
- › ___ Rest assured that we will not share or sell participants' information and all comments provided by participants are kept anonymous.
- › ___ Standard text rates apply, so groups should use someone's phone who has a high or unlimited text limit.

We'd love to hear your group's experience with Text, Talk, Ready Set Go! Please send comments to Raquel at raquel@texttalkact.com.