

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SCENARIOS

Ask the students if they feel that what happens to a person in early childhood impacts him/her in life. Discuss their ideas. Place the students into groups of four or five. Tell them that you are going to read to them several situations or scenarios and you would like them to discuss how they think the person highlighted in the scenario would be as an adult. Have them write down their conclusions for each scenario to be discussed with the entire class. Allow them 2-4 minutes for each report.

1. Vincent is the eighth child in a family of ten children. His biological father fathered him and two of the girls in his family. The rest of the children have been fathered by various other men. His mother is raising all ten children on her own. The family lives on the "other side of town" or in the ghettos. They have a three-room house with no indoor plumbing and only two beds. Most of the children sleep on the floor. Vincent is known to be a bully who throws rocks at cars and at children's heads. He also beat up his girl cousin with a baseball bat. He has aimed loaded guns at people. His mother beats and whips him regularly, trying to get him to stop his negative behavior.
2. Tonya is an only child. Her parents got a divorce when she was very young. Her mother, with whom Tonya lives, has to work outside of the home to support the family. Her mother often beats her and emotionally abuses her. Her mother often tells Tonya that she is not good.
3. Jeff lives in a traditional family with a younger brother and his parents. His family is very religious. His parents are very supportive and loving. They strive to provide a nurturing atmosphere in their home. Jeff's parents occasionally argue. For the most part, Jeff's family fits the profile of a typical, traditional family.
4. Charlie's mom was 15 and unmarried when he was born. Because she was so young and unprepared for the responsibilities of raising a child, Charlie spent most of his early childhood in foster homes with many different substitute parents. Charlie is now 12 years old and his mother has given him to social services to find a home for him.

After completing all of the scenarios, tell the class who the person is.

1. Vincent Edward Jackson, or Bo Jackson, overcame the abuse and hardships of his childhood and is one of the only athletes to have ever played two different professional sports.
2. Tonya Harding was the 1994 United States National Figure Skating Champion and also represented the United States in the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. She was involved in a scandal in which figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, her rival, was attacked.
3. Jeffrey Dahmer confessed to brutally killing 17 men and even keeping some of their body parts in his freezer for months, as well as eating some of their flesh. He is one of the most horrifying murderers known in the United States.
4. Charlie is Charles Manson; he was the mastermind of Helter-Skelter, or the Tate/LaBianca murders. This was a two-day killing spree in which seven people were left mutilated and dead.

Discuss how some individuals can overcome great obstacles in their childhood while others allow themselves to be victims or to fail due to their early environment. There is no question that we are influenced and molded by our childhood. **However, it is how we react to these influences that is vital for personal success. You can choose to overcome or succumb to negative situations and influences in your own childhood, like these people we have discussed.**

It is imperative that you, as future parents, strive to build and provide a positive base for your own future children or for any children you are in contact with in your life. This does not guarantee that the children will have successful, happy lives, but it certainly gives them a head start at life.