



Empowering young people to make life-enriching choices

# TUG-OF-LIFE®

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

### FOR SCHOOLS

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ADOLESCENTS

\* SIMPLE \* PRACTICAL \* IMMEDIATE RESULTS \* APPLICABLE TO ALL GRADES \*

Tug-of-Life provides a practical approach to addressing issues that schools grapple with

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# Life Talk



## A. SYNOPSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- Step 1:** You will need your starter pack which comprises: the *Tug-of-Life* book; a set of posters; and a CD of the 3-minute introductory video-clip depicting the Tug-of-Life. (See Annexure A pg.6 for the terminology.)
- Step 2:** Explain the concept to all your educators, and play the 3-minute video clip.
- Step 3:** Identify and brief your school's Tug-of-Life 'champion'.
- Step 4:** Explain the Tug-of-Life concept during assembly, and play the video clip.
- Step 5:** Incorporate the concept and terminology into lessons (e.g. Life Orientation and others)

## B. PURPOSE OF THE TUG-OF-LIFE INITIATIVE & METHODOLOGY

Today's adolescents face enormous challenges that derail far too many lives at an escalating pace (e.g. binge-drinking, drugs, bullying, promiscuity and many others). The Tug-of-Life is about empowering millions of young people to take control of their lives through proactive thinking, wise choices and applying sound values.

Tug-of-Life's approach is life-changing, provides a new way of thinking, and takes effect straight away. Its concept can be applied to any situation in life. The initiative is about galvanising the youth (and society) into actively 'tugging' for what truly counts in their lives.

The methodology is simple to implement and easily applied to any scenario, from the staff room to the classroom. This short implementation guide explains to educators how to introduce the concept to learners, and the *Tug-of-Life* book gives many examples of the 4 characters that take part in learners' lives (eg **Challengers** such as alcohol, drugs and bullying, **Galvanizers** such as values and skills, **Factors** such as peer pressure and hormones, and **Ch-izers** such as technology and social media). Once the concept has been explained to learners they can apply it immediately to all aspects of their lives.

## C. GETTING STARTED

- 1. Get to know the methodology and terminology.** We suggest that you familiarise yourself with the concepts by reading through the *Tug-of-Life* book. The **Introduction** on page 7, **Meet the Contestants** on pages 8–9 as well as **Glossary of Tug-of-Life terms** on pages 199–200 is a good place to start. This will provide you with background and understanding to successfully implement this initiative in your school. **Sections 1–7** drill down into each 'contest', highlighting Challengers, Factors, Ch-izers and Galvanizers relating to that particular scenario.  
  
Depending on age-group, some of the sections will be more relevant than others. For learners from grade 10 up, all seven sections are of significance because they deal with issues that are (or will shortly be) encountered by the learners. The more thought they now give to a wide range of aspects, the better prepared they will be. Other topics such as health, spirit and the environment are of relevance to all age groups. For children from grade 0-6 the concepts can be covered during the activities outlined in Section D. For educators and parents, all nine sections are of relevance.
- 2. Explain the concept to all your educators, and play the 3-minute video clip.** Explain that the concept is simple, takes effect immediately, triggers behaviour change, makes educators' lives easier by addressing some of the issues they might be grappling with, and doesn't entail extra work for the educators.
- 3. Identify a Tug-of-Life champion** in your school. Whether the principal, LO educator or other, the role will include:
  - Driving the implementation of the Tug-of-Life at the school, and ensuring that the educators understand the methodology and that they apply it wherever possible.
  - Ensuring that the posters are displayed.
  - Informing the parents, thereby equipping them to reinforce the messages at home.
  - Liaising with the educators regarding any issues they may encounter, and engaging with Life Talk should any assistance or guidance be required.

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4. **Explain the Tug-of-Life concept** during assembly.
  - a. Give a brief description of the concept, the characters (Challengers, Galvanizers etc) and how they are applicable to all situations in life.
  - b. Play the 3-minute introductory video-clip (if facilities allow for visuals and sound).
  - c. For maximum effect the art students could create a Tug-of-Life scene, with a rope and relevant characters that you could use to illustrate your message.
5. **Encourage all learners and educators to apply the terminology** in their daily lives. The concept can be applied at school, at home, with friends, and in all subjects. For example:
  - a. If learners are battling with issues such as bullying, stress, sport or Maths, they could tackle it as the tug-of-bullying, tug-of-stress, tug-of-sport or the tug-of-maths. In each scenario they can identify the Challengers, Galvanizers, Factors and Ch-izers, and they can then take appropriate action.
  - b. By encouraging learners (educators and parents) to apply the Tug-of-Life to each situation, you empower them to identify the problem, the related choices, consequences, desired outcomes and action plan.
  - c. Other issues they can tackle as specific 'contests' could include dilemmas about: relationships, peer pressure, family difficulties, learning challenges, eating disorders, loneliness, addictions, and others.
  - d. Parents too might enjoy being able to unpack the complexities of challenges they face as parents, at work, in marriage, with health or other issues.
6. **Display Tug-of-Life posters and terminology** in as many classrooms as possible. The posters provide visual aids to support the messages, and they enhance the activities. **Displaying the terminology page** in all classrooms maintains learners' attention on the key characters in their lives. **Displaying Tug-of-Life scenes (eg a rope and some cut-out characters)** in the hall or other prominent places keeps the process top-of-mind.
7. **Use the concepts with children from Grades 0 – 12 (See Section D for specific activities)**
8. **Integrate the concept into existing Life Orientation material** by weaving it into any topic being tackled. For example: if the topic is "appropriate behaviour in a conflict situation", the learners can be asked to identify their personal Challengers, Factors, Ch-izers and Galvanizers.
9. **Regularly remind learners to keep identifying the various characters** taking part in their daily lives.
10. **Incorporate concepts into art, drama, dance or other activities.** The topics can also be used for speeches, poems and essay-writing exercises. Performances and exhibitions can be held for parents and other schools.
11. **Consider appointing Tug-of-Life ambassadors in every Grade**, to monitor issues and keep concepts top-of-mind. An ambassador would be a learner who is keen to promote use of the Tug-of-Life among classmates and to encourage them to seek help whenever they identify serious challenges or problems.
12. **Explain the Tug-of-Life to parents** so they can reinforce the messages at home. This can be done by giving a talk to parents or by sending them a newsletter.
13. **Encourage parents to establish parenting Forums** where relevant topics could be addressed. Interested parents could establish the Forum and Life Talk could help by providing guidelines if necessary.
14. **Competitions** can be held between grades (or between schools) for best depictions of life's dilemmas. Sponsors could be approached to sponsor prizes, thereby generating more support for what your school is achieving.

For effective and life-changing results it is important to engage the learners' thought-process on an ongoing basis. By having the concept 'top of mind', young people become conscious of their challenges, choices, consequences and the outcomes they strive for, and they become proactive and better able to take charge of their lives.

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## D. ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT IN LIFE ORIENTATION & OTHER SUBJECTS

In each of the exercises below, it is important that the educator/facilitator engages in dialogue by introducing and discussing the different characters, factors and contests as they appear in real life so that the children can start to apply the methodology and terminology outside of the school and in all aspects of their day-to-day lives.

### a. Tug-of-Life 2-part session (extremely effective, can be used for **Grades 5-12**)

Part 1: Introduction to the Tug-of-Life concept and characters. Identify some relevant Challengers, Ch-izers, Factors and Galvanizers, and draw up a 'game plan'. (Can be facilitated by an educator or counsellor)

Part 2: A 40 minute group breakaway discussion (split into smaller groups)

Questions the facilitators could get children to ask themselves include:

- What kind of person do I want to be (what's my "goal person")? What outcomes do I want in my life (eg: a good reputation; friends with sound values; passing exams; good relationship with God; happiness etc.)
- Do my choices lead me towards, or away from, my goal person?
- What Challengers can I identify in my life, and in the lives of friends/peers? (Refer to *Tug-of-Life* pages 13–22 for grades 6 up, and identify other Challengers faced by younger age-groups)
- What Galvanizers do I want on my side? (Refer to relevant pages for grades 6 up, see pages 29-33)
- What are my boundaries and 'contest' rules for my life?
- How can I apply the Tug-of-Life to all aspects of my life: at home, at school, with friends, at parties/clubs, in my faith, in subjects or situations I might struggle with?

Outcome: From feedback, such sessions provoke long-lasting thought about choices, consequences, desired outcomes and values. They trigger behaviour-change and have the ability to change lives.

The feedback could be turned into another lesson, or it could be used for writing an essay or a poem which could be used for first-language class marks.

### b. Art; drama; dance; song, technology can all be used to demonstrate the concepts. (**Grades 0 – 12**). Scenes can be drawn, made from clay or acted out, and sets can be made using a rope and large cut-out characters, for display in halls, classrooms or for exhibitions. Technology concepts can be used to make the scenes out of recycled materials. One could run a competition into this focusing on e.g. Tug-of-Environment.

### c. Debating and/or role playing (**Grades 4 - 12**)

Create teams where learners have to debate different ways of using the **Tug-of-Life** methodology in their own lives. For role-playing: use Challengers listed in the **Tug-of-Teens**, **Tug-of-Health** and **Tug-of-Spirit** (and other sections) and let them take turns in playing different roles i.e. Galvanizers, Factors, Ch-izers, Ostriches and Bystanders. How does each of these roles impact on their lives? Is there some action they need to start taking now to avoid the Challengers? Is there someone they could ask for help or talk to about what they are facing? This could also be role-played to get them comfortable asking for help or talking about difficult things.

### d. Individual or group project (making the 'field of life') – can be adapted to **Grades 0 - 8**

Method: Create a 'field'/tile with clay or cardboard characters. Encourage learners to 'play out' situations to familiarise and empower themselves in different scenarios. Debate the pros and cons to stimulate discussion.

Outcome: 'Playing out' different scenarios encourages them to think about how they would respond appropriately in different situations.

### e. Box of Galvanizers (**Grades 1 – 12**)

Method: Get (or make a box) and encourage learners to add words, pictures or objects as they identify more of their own Galvanizers. Check monthly to see if they're using the box and any difference being experienced.

Outcome: Actively engaging the learners with Galvanizers they can choose from when the need arises.

### f. Story book (grades 4 – 7)

Method: Encourage creativity and imagination by getting learners to create their own stories involving the characters. This can also be used to deal with current situations or news stories by discussing an incident and asking them to write how, with the use of Galvanizers, the Challengers could have been avoided.

Outcome: Children become participants in tackling Challengers before they have to confront them in real life.

### g. Colouring in. (**Grades 0 – 3**) Colouring in a tug-of-life scene and labelling the characters/contestants introduces the concept of choices and 'good' and 'bad' influences to the children.

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## h. Puppets (grades 0 – 6)

Method: Allow each child to make a puppet character out of scrap materials, socks, paper or cardboard, then prepare a dialogue to demonstrate what each character stands for and how they could play out in somebody's life. They can share this among their groups or to the whole school.

Outcome: Puppets allow great freedom of expression and allow children to 'speak' their minds. Creating opportunities to 'be' different characters through puppeteering is a safe way to explore and understand.

## i. A Tug-of-Life event for families

A Tug-of-Life event or day can be held for families, and activities could include:

### I. A fun day centred around the Tug-of-Life theme

The theme could be used in games, painting, drama, dance or general group discussions.

### II. Breakaway sessions addressing the issues encountered in the:

- i. Tug-of-Teens (for pre-teens and teens)
- ii. Tug-of-Spirit (for all faith-related dilemmas and issues)
- iii. Tug-of-Health (all)
- iv. Tug-of-Parenting
- v. Tug-of-Young-Adults or Marriage/Relationships (grades 11-12 and parents)
- vi. Tug-of-Age (for anyone over 35, plus grandparents)
- vii. Tug-of-Work (discussing the challenges faced in the workplace – grades 11-12 or adults)

j. **Any other ideas that you, the other educators or learners might come up with.** The activities listed so far are suggestions, so many other ideas can be applied too.

## k. Additional support and resources

- I. Life Talk's talks and workshops for parents, learners or educators. Topics include all of the above plus: building self-esteem; addressing bullying; enhancing communication (and many more aspects).
- II. Parenting newsletters and tips from the Life Talk Forum
- III. Parenting forums can be established by interested parents. Life Talk helps by providing guidelines.

## E. WHAT DOES IT COST AND HOW CAN IT BE FINANCED?

Costs can be kept to a minimum and they depend on the options rolled out. Costs borne by each school depend on whether the school pays for materials or if parents make a contribution.

For maximum effect each child should ideally have their own *Tug-of-Life* handbook. If a large-scale roll-out with maximum impact is to be implemented among disadvantaged schools, then funding would be required. Funding options could include:

- ✓ Approaching philanthropic individuals or organisations to join you in making a great difference to SA's youth.
- ✓ Using proceeds from the sale of *Tug-of-Life* books to more affluent schools to supplement costs at poorer schools.
- ✓ Life Talk Forum is a registered PBO so donations for the initiative are tax deductible for individuals or corporates, and we are BBBEE rated, so corporates can enhance their CSI by supporting elements of the initiative.

## F. SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT LIFE TALK

Life Talk is a non-profit organisation dedicated to addressing the challenges that affect the lives of today's children and young adults. Our mission is to empower millions of young people to take control of their lives through proactive thinking, wise choices and applying sound values.

**WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [WWW.TUGOFLIFE.COM](http://WWW.TUGOFLIFE.COM)**

**If ever you'd like help or information, or to contact one of the directors please write to  
[Forum@lifetalk.co.za](mailto:Forum@lifetalk.co.za)**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU TO MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO OUR YOUTH!**



## ANNEXURE A: SUMMARY OF TERMINOLOGY (MEET THE CONTESTANTS)

Each Tug-of-Life situation has a number of 'contestants' that fall into six discernible categories:

1. **CHALLENGERS** – The challenges and troublemakers (human and otherwise) that disrupt your life. Their presence creates dilemmas and sabotages positive outcomes. Binge-drinking, drugs, bullying, pornography and crime are examples of Challengers.
2. **GALVANIZERS** – The invaluable aspects, actions, virtues and people that help to defeat the Challengers. Always positive, they empower you with the strength required to win your contests. Without Galvanizers life becomes really tough. Some Galvanizers include: education, willpower, faith, self-discipline and wise choices.
3. **CH-IZERS** – The double-sided Challenger/Galvanizer combos that change their nature as they flit between the two opposing sides. When 'tugging' for the Galvanizers, Ch-izers are a huge ally, but when they tug for the Challengers they create problems. Some Ch-izers include technology, social media, parties and money.
4. **FACTORS** – The reasons (or excuses) that explain why the Challengers exist and why they grow in strength. Some Factors (stress, hormones, poverty or materialism) might make sense, but others merely provide excuses to justify negative behaviour.
5. **BYSTANDERS** – People who observe from the side-lines without getting involved in their life's contests. They watch to see if someone else will tackle the Challengers.
6. **OSTRICHES** – People who prefer to avoid reality in the hope that non-participation or denial will result in everything turning out okay. Occasionally a de-stressing or survival tactic, this might work as long as there's nothing major at stake in their particular contest.

These six categories of 'contestants' tend to be present in each of your life's contests. Now that you're aware of them you'll probably spot them wherever you go. You may also identify additional ones which may pop up in the various situations that you encounter. One thing's for sure, there's always something going on somewhere! The good news is that by being aware of what's going on you can be prepared, and you can make informed decisions which, in turn, can bring about the kind of outcomes that you're striving for.

### Other terms used in the Tug-of-Life include:

**CONTESTANTS** – The people and aspects that play any kind of role in your life. Contestants include you, and the elements and people that can be classified as Challengers, Galvanizers, Ch-izers, Factors, Bystanders and Ostriches (and other contestant categories that you may identify).

**CONTESTS and SUB-CONTESTS** – The dilemmas and 'tug-of-war' scenarios that occur within your life, and within society. Whenever two or more options or opposing elements are present, some kind of contest will be taking place in that area. Sub-contests develop when specific Challengers (e.g. communication breakdown, substance abuse, corruption or AIDS) become hard to overcome and require individual attention.

**FIELD** – The arena where your life unfolds and where your contests take place. Whenever you'd like to know more about what's happening in your life, draw your 'field' and all your contests, jot down the Challengers, Factors and Ch-izers that are involved, pick the Galvanizers that will help you to get to where you want to be, and select where you're going to stand.

**GALVANIZER INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANISATIONS** – People or organizations whose contributions, efforts or values have a positive impact on others' lives.

**ROPE** – Your life is represented by the rope, and the knot is the marker that indicates whether you're firmly on Galvanizer-ground, or whether you've been hauled into the Challengers' territory.

**TUG** – The metaphor that depicts the actions taken by you (and by the other contestants) in response to the choices that present themselves. The reality is that if you choose not to 'tug' on the Galvanizers' side then your life will, at some stage, end up overpowered by the Challengers.