

GETTING AHEAD COVID-19 SUPPLEMENT

TO: Getting Ahead Facilitators
FROM: Philip DeVol
RE: Updating the Getting Ahead series to include information on the impact of COVID-19 on individuals, communities, and the nation
DATE: May 14, 2020

The Fourth Edition of *Getting Ahead* was released in the first quarter of 2020, the same time the COVID-19 pandemic began to disrupt our lives. At the time of this writing, there is no way to anticipate the full impact of COVID-19 on American people and the world.

Nonetheless, we can project that we will not be able to return to the “normal” experienced before January 2020. In fact, there were many things about that “normal” that we would not want to return to, such as the conditions that made life so difficult for people in poverty and other marginalized people.

In response to COVID-19, we must, as Getting Ahead investigators do, free ourselves from the tyranny of the moment and create a “future story” for ourselves and our communities that is better than what we had at the end of 2019. Here are three other thoughts along the same line:

1. Weiji (way-gee) is a Chinese concept that a dangerous time or crisis can offer an opportunity.
2. Gene Krebs, coauthor of *Bridges Across Every Divide*, says, “Crises like a war, or a pandemic, tend to accelerate a trend that would have unfolded over 20 years and compress it down to 20 months.”
3. Fully developed Bridges initiatives can offer their communities a methodology for building the a “better” normal. They are already working with the populations that were impacted by COVID-19 the most: people of color, people in poverty, the working poor, and other marginalized people.

This document and the accompanying webinar are designed for use by certified Getting Ahead facilitators. They provide an easy-to-use way of bringing COVID-19 into the investigations and ultimately into the future stories and plans of the Getting Ahead graduates. This document can be changed as we learn more about the world that follows the pandemic. For now, the changes are largely added to the discussions following activities and investigations.

It’s my hope that facilitators will record how this approach works and participate in discussions that help improve the next iteration of it. This will be necessary because so much of what happens after COVID-19 is outside of our control. We don’t know if poverty will become more entrenched or if more people will be brought into a secure and vibrant society.

For the immediate future, this is our approach to bringing the COVID-19 experience into Getting Ahead. Naturally, Getting Ahead investigators and facilitators will be immersed in the aftermath of COVID-19. The module-by-module questions about COVID-19 will help make Getting



Ahead relevant to their lived experience. Getting Ahead has worked in the past because it adds context to what investigators experience, deepening their understanding of the broader issues of the day and arming them to take a leading role in solving problems in their communities, as well as their own lives.

The additions are made in the following modules:

1 – My Life Now

2 – Theory of Change

3 – The Rich/Poor Gap and Research on Causes of Poverty

6 – Eleven Resources

8 – Community Assessment

9 – Building Resources

MODULE 1 – My Life Now

Page 9 – Discussion; add the following questions:

1. How were you impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What problems did it add to your life?
3. How was your neighborhood impacted? Local businesses? The city or county?
4. How were people of different races, ethnicities, ages, and genders impacted?
5. What is it like now for you and the others? Was there a recovery? What was the recovery like?
6. How has the experience of poverty changed because of COVID-19?
7. Does your mental model of poverty include the impact of COVID-19?

MODULE 2 – Theory of Change

Page 27 – Discussion; add the following:

1. Did your relationships with local organizations change because of COVID-19?
2. If so, was it for the better? Was it worse?
3. What were your relationships like with staff of those organizations?

Page 34 – Discussion; add the following:

1. What was the effect of COVID-19 on the stability in your life?
2. What was the effect of COVID-19 on the stability of your family, neighborhood, workplace, and community?



Page 36 – Discussion; add the following:

1. Did you experience the “tyranny of the moment” during the COVID-19 pandemic? Do you experience it now?
2. Is there a difference between the “tyranny of the moment” before and after COVID-19?

MODULE 3: The Rich/Poor Gap and Research on Causes of Poverty

Page 43 – Add this below the last paragraph on the page and read it to the group:

“The economic problems brought on by COVID-19 may well be worse than the economic collapse of 2008. As you read the causes of poverty listed on the next page (1) note the ones that relate most to COVID-19, and (2) add and talk about new causes of poverty caused by COVID-19.”

Page 52 – Discussion; add to the three discussion questions:

1. Reviewing the description of the “Creation of the Middle Class,” identify which forms of wealth creation were provided by the private (business) sector and which forms were provided by the government.
2. What forms of wealth creation are being offered to people in poverty and the working class following the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What forms of wealth can individuals create from their own efforts?

Note to facilitators: This investigation can trigger partisan passions in you and the investigators. It’s okay for them to make their points of view; it isn’t okay for you to do so. A way to calm partisan flare-ups is to remind the group that it’s not either/or. What works best is to have individuals, businesses, and government all working for a society where everyone can live well.

Page 63 – Discussion; add to discussion questions:

1. The middle class was shrinking before COVID-19 struck. What did COVID-19 do to the middle class and those in wealth?

MODULE 4: Hidden Rules of Economic Class

Page 77 – Discussion; add to discussion questions:

1. What conditions and hidden rules of class did COVID-19 reveal?
2. What did it reveal about how people think of each other across class lines? Did opinions improve? Worsen? Stay the same?
3. What did it reveal about things we share in common?



Page 83 – Discussion; add to discussion questions:

1. Do you know people from other racial/ethnic groups?
2. Do you know how each of these racial/ethnic communities was hit by COVID-19?
3. What came out of COVID-19 that everyone experienced?

MODULE 6: Eleven Resources

Page 136 – Discussion; add to discussion questions:

1. Which resources were most threatened by COVID-19?
2. Which resources were the most difficult to stabilize, maintain, or build during the pandemic?
3. Which resources helped you the most during and after COVID-19?