Skittles Game
Engagement in a Box

Time Needed: 20 to 30 minutes
Group size: 10 to 50 – divide into groups of 10

Overview
The focus of this engagement is to give you an overview of United Way’s work in the areas of Education, Safety and Health. After experiencing this simulation game, participants will have a better understanding of how poverty affects families and how United Way’s strategies in Education, Safety, and Health are creating real solutions to pave pathways for families out of poverty.

Items Needed for Engagement

- 10 paper lunch bags
- 1 large bag of Skittles or other small candy
- 1 set of laminated activity cards
- 5 additional Support Cards
- 1 paper plate

Preparation for Engagement
For every group of 10, fill bags accordingly:
- 1 bag with a lot of candies
- 7 bags with 5 candies – put a United Way 2-1-1 Card in 2 of these bags
- 2 bags with 2 candies.
- Pour a pile of Skittles onto a paper plate and place in the center of the group.
- Put the cards in a pile; face down in the center of the group.

How to Execute the Engagement

1. Explain to the group that the Skittles represent wealth.
2. Hand out paper bags to each group and allow each to see how many Skittles they have.
3. Players take turns picking a card from the pile, and reading the card aloud. Based on the instructions, they either gain or lose their Skittles to the pile in the center.
4. If someone draws a United Way 2-1-1 Card from the pile, they skip their turn and hold onto the card for later.
5. The United Way 2-1-1 Card can be used to cover one turn after person runs out of candy.
6. When a player runs out of Skittles and United Way 2-1-1 Cards, they must leave the group and gather in one corner of the room.
7. After about 20 minutes, ask participants to stop playing. Bring all the groups together to discuss the game.
Your spouse got a raise! Life looks great!  

GAIN 2

Your great-grandma just passed away and left you $15,000 in her will.  

GAIN 2

You finished the Certified Nursing Assistant program at Madison College, and now can get a better job.  

GAIN 1

You played around during high school, but your dad went to Yale and gives big bucks! You’re in!  

GAIN 2

You played around during high school, but your dad went to Yale and gives big bucks! You’re in!  

GAIN 2

You received food share, so now you can afford to buy fresh vegetables and fruits.  

GAIN 1

Your family is able to pay your college expenses, so you don’t have to work and can concentrate on your classes.  

GAIN 1

Your uncle owns a business and sets you up with a great job.  

GAIN 1
Your mother passed away. You are having a hard time coping with this change and experiencing signs of depression.

LOSE 1

Your neighbor used to take care of your children during your evening shift. She just moved away, and now there’s no one to watch your kids while you’re at work.

LOSE 1

Your hours and days at work just got cut. Other workers who complained have been fired.

LOSE 1

You had an apartment fire and no insurance to cover the cost of everything lost in the fire.

LOSE 2

Your job was eliminated at your employer. You can’t find a new job and now you are about to get evicted.

LOSE 2

Your roommate decided to exit your lease early, you can’t afford your apartment alone. You and your two children are staying in shelter.

LOSE 1

You interviewed for a great job, but it’s not on the bus line and you can’t afford a car.

LOSE 1

You move to a cheaper apartment. Now your car needs new brakes, and you just paid rent. You have to take out a loan from PayDay Loans at 150% interest.

LOSE 2
You just found out that you need surgery and you have health insurance with an extremely high deductible.

LOSE 1

Your son just got out of jail. He’s looking for work, but employers don’t want to hire people with a criminal record.

LOSE 1

Childcare costs half of what you earn, but if you don’t work you can’t pay rent.

LOSE 1

You got sick and missed 3 days of work the week before rent was due. Now you don’t have the money to pay rent, and the landlord charges $50 for late payment.

LOSE 1

You didn’t have good dental care as a kid, and now you have lots of damage and are in terrible pain. A trip to the dentist means a full day of lost pay.

LOSE 1

You know you have an alcohol problem and need to get help, but there are always waiting lists when you feel ready to go into treatment.

LOSE 1

You interviewed for a great job, but it’s not on the bus line and you can’t afford a car.

LOSE 1

Your elderly mother fell at home and needed to go to the hospital. She’s doing fine now, but the hospital bills are over $6,000 and the collections office is calling you.

LOSE 1
Your car breaks down again, this time for good. There’s no grocery store near you. The corner Quik-Mart is very expensive and the milk is often spoiled.

**LOSE 1**

You lost your job. Luckily, your spouse is still working and can support you for a while.

**LOSE 1 and GAIN 1**

You graduated! Congratulations! Now you have $30,000 in student loans to pay off.

**LOSE 1 and GAIN 1**

You had a bad drinking problem, but a private treatment center and a year with a great counselor helped you beat it.

**LOSE 2 and GAIN 1**

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You got a raise! Unfortunately, your higher income level now means you lose your daycare subsidy. You now pay more out-of-pocket for your childcare.

**GAIN 1 and LOSE 2**

You found a new apartment, well within your budget! It is right on a bus line, and within walking distance of a grocery store and your kids’ schools. This means you don’t have to depend on your old car anymore.

**GAIN 1**

The Ride Free Area downtown has been discontinued. You now have to pay $12 extra per week to get between your two part-time jobs downtown.

**LOSE 1**

Your daughter is filling out college applications. They cost about $50 each, and she’s applying to six schools.

**LOSE 1**

Your family’s food share benefits are being cut. You now have to pay more out-of-pocket to feed your family.

**LOSE 1**

The food bank where you volunteer has an opening for a part-time paid position. They ask you to fill it because they know you’re an excellent worker.

**GAIN 1**

Your son gets accepted into a selective after-school music program on a scholarship. Now you don’t have to pay for after-school care, and he’s learning.

**GAIN 2**

Your aunt’s house is foreclosed on, and she needs a place to stay. She promises she’ll help out with the grocery and utility bills once she finds a job.

**LOSE 1**
Your divorce is finalized, but your ex hasn’t started paying their monthly child support yet. You have attorney fees to deal with, and are the sole provider for your kids.

LOSE 1

You’ve been recruited to a higher paying job in a nearby city. You decide to move once your lease is up, but in the meantime, you have to drive 50 miles round-trip every day. The commute is hard on you and your family.

GAIN 2 and LOSE 1
Discussion Questions for Skittles Game

1. What happened during the game? How easy was it to hold onto your Skittles? How did the people feel who lost all their Skittles? How about the people who ended the game with lots of Skittles?
2. Why did people start out with different numbers of Skittles in their bag?
3. Do you think these situations are realistic? Have you known people that have been through situations like these?
4. What kind of support could the United Way 2-1-1 Cards represent? How can family, friends and community help people get through hard times?
5. What are some other situations that might keep people in poverty, or help them get out of poverty?

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2. Why did people start out with different numbers of Skittles in their bag?
3. Do you think these situations are realistic? Have you known people that have been through situations like these?
4. What kind of support could the Support Cards represent? How can family, friends and community help people get through hard times?
5. What are some other situations that might keep people in poverty, or help them get out of poverty?