CSI / Locus of Control Exercise

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Rationale: Students enroll in classes with the expectation that they will pass, but sometimes life intervenes. This exercise is designed to help students think in advance about their resources, the consequences of their choices, their backup plans, and the back up plans to their back up plans. This activity is very empowering.

Instructions: Print the following scenarios onto card stock, one copy per group of 3-5. Below the scenarios are three graphics that you can cut apart and paste onto colorful card stock or construction paper for each group.

Suggested instructions to the students, Part One: How many of you are familiar with the TV show, CSI (Crime Scene Investigation)? On that show, a team of investigators solves a mystery in about 60 minutes. Today, you are going to work in teams to look at typical situations that happen to college students. Although each of these could be devastating to academic success, in each case, there are proactive things the student can do in order to survive and thrive. The first thing your group will do is to sort these scenarios into three categories. The "suicides" are scenarios where the student's choices might kill his chances for success. The "homicides" are scenarios where someone else's choices might kill the student's chances for success. The "accidents" are no-fault scenarios that might kill the student's chances for success. Allow time for each group to sort their scenarios. Encourage discussion in the small groups and circulate as they work. Then, debrief by reading the scenario and asking a group where they sorted it. If another group put it into another category, encourage brief discussion. A scenario may fit into more than one category depending upon the reasoning, and that is a value of this exercise. Then, ask each group to pull out at least one scenario from each category and think of as many potential solutions as possible. Encourage students to use their syllabus, knowledge of faculty and campus resources, and ingenuity. For example, if Fran's car battery is dead, she can call her relative or a friend to take her to school. Perhaps someone in her class lives near her (a great opportunity to stress the importance of making connections to classmates). She can call a taxi, or may be able to walk, bicycle, etc. As each group reports on their survival strategy, they post their scenario and solutions onto a large poster, which can be displayed in the classroom. Follow up instruction: Unsuccessful students tend to blame everyone else for their failures. However, successful students realize that there are options, resources, and best action plans to survive.
even the worst situations. Psychologists call that “locus of control.” Having strong internal locus of control, knowledge of resources and thinking about potential problems in advance are key college and life skills. **Follow up journal activity:** Choose the biggest barrier to your success. Is it potentially a suicide, homicide or accident? What strategies will you use to survive and thrive?

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Arnie's friends call him to go clubbing the nights before classes, and he goes with them.

Barbara wakes up with high fever and serious congestion. She doesn't want to miss class, but she decides to stay home.

All of Carlos' friends are in school at the university. They tell him that since he is at Lone Star College, he will never finish a degree.

Diane cannot afford to buy the books for her classes.
Several employees at Edward's job have quit. The boss offers Edward a small pay raise and a manager's title, but only if he will agree to come whenever someone is needed. Edward may have to miss classes frequently.

Fran got ready for classes and climbed in her car, but the battery was dead, and the car wouldn't start. Everyone in her family had gone to school or work.

George's father always tells him that he is stupid, and he will never make it in life.

Heidi could not find a parking place.

Ignacio does not understand the material that is presented in his class.

Jennifer found herself stuck in traffic. An accident blocks the road ahead, and traffic is stopped behind her for several blocks.
It is mid-semester. Keith has been working 40 hours a week while taking four classes. He is failing two of them and behind in all of the required reading for each of his courses. A paper is due, and he faces a major math exam. He decides to quit coming to classes.

Lucia's traditional parents are forcing her into an arranged marriage.

A hurricane hits Houston dead on. Most of the city loses power for a week. There are leaks in the roof of Marvin's home, and an oak tree straddles their downed power line, so it may be weeks before the power is restored and the roof is repaired on Marvin's house. One of the leaks ruined Marvin's backpack, books and notes. Marvin hears from a friend that the college has been closed for a week, classes begin tomorrow.

Naomi's brother is diagnosed with the H1N1 flu virus, and the entire family is quarantined.

When his father lost his job, Paul discovered that he cannot afford to stay in school.
Rhonda's backpack, books, essays, projects, and notes were stolen.

Steve's grandfather is seriously ill, and no one else in the family is available to care for him.

The night before Withdraw Day, Traci looks at all of her grades. Her average is 70 in her classes, so she decides to quit.

After weeks of arguing, Vince's girlfriend breaks up with him. He is sad and depressed, and he feels like quitting everything including college.

Wilma discovers that she is pregnant. She is worried about her parents' reaction, has no means of supporting herself and the child, and her partner is acting like he will soon break up with her.
Zack spent a year in the military in the Iraq War. Now he feels like he does not fit in to life in America, and he especially does not fit into college.

It is the night before class and you can’t find the homework assignment. What do you do?

You have a major exam the next day and you have had 2 hours of sleep because you spent 8 hours at the emergency room. What should you do?

Your roommate lost his or her job and can’t pay next month’s rent. You are responsible for the rent and have to work more hours to pay it. You can’t attend your afternoon class because of your work schedule. What could you do?

You were sick and missed an entire week of classes. What should you do?

Your cell phone rings in class. What do you do?
Your phone is on vibrate because your (child, parent, sibling) is ill. The phone vibrates during class. What should you do?

You failed the first exam. What should you do?

You and your partner are presenting your semester project to the class and your partner doesn’t show up for class that day. What should you do?

You want to meet with your instructor, but you have class during his or her office hours. What should you do?

You lost your syllabus. What do you do?

You are going to be absent and you have an assignment due. What should you do?

You know that you have a court date that cannot be rearranged and you notice on your assignment sheet that there is an exam that day. What should you do?
You have an assignment due and you are not going to make it to class. What should you do?

As you approach your car to leave for class, you find that you have a flat tire. No major assignments are due and it is not an exam day. What should you do?

You have a group project due the next day and you discover that one group member has not done their portion of the project. What are your options?

You miss a major assignment because you overslept. What should you do?

It is mid-term and your average is 71. What do you do?

You haven’t done half of the assignments in My Reading Lab or My Writing Lab and it is the middle of the semester. What should you do?

Your friends call at 8:00 PM and ask you to go out. You have a test the next morning. What should you do?
C.S.I. FILE
Suicide

C.S.I. FILE
Homicide
C.S.I. FILE
Accident