

# SHOPPING YOUR WAY TO JAIL

Distribute **paper** and **pencils** and invite group members to write answers to these questions (*without* putting their names on the papers):

- How often have you shoplifted in the last year?
- If you have shoplifted in the last year, what did you steal?
- If you shoplifted in the last year, what was your reason for shoplifting?
- Do you believe shoplifting is wrong? If so, why? If not, why not?

Ask two volunteers to collect the papers and to summarize the answers on **chalkboard or newsprint**, guarding confidentiality. Discuss:

- Are the results of our poll surprising? not surprising?
- How would you feel about shoplifting if you were the owner of a small store? the parent of someone who shoplifted? the child of someone who shoplifted?
- Why do people shoplift? Share the information in Shoplifting Incentives. Which motives fit your experience? What other motives would you add to the list?
- How would you help someone overcome a problem with shoplifting?

## SHOPLIFTING INCENTIVES

- #1 Shoplifting is a way to get recognized, to surprise and impress friends.
- #2 Shoplifting—and getting caught—is a way to get attention. Sometimes negative attention is better than no attention at all.
- #3 Shoplifters may feel cheated because others have more material possessions, or they may come from families that can't afford some basic necessities.
- #4 Stealing can fill emotional needs. The acquisition of "stuff" can temporarily satisfy emotional cravings. Shoplifting can work the way shopping does for many adults.
- #5 Shoplifting can be an expression of anger, a way to strike out against authority and social standards.
- #6 Shoplifting may be a response to peer pressure. Members of a social group can insist that you prove yourself by breaking the rules.
- #7 Poor role models can contribute to shoplifting. Teenagers whose parents nonchalantly steal from their companies or cheat on their taxes teach their kids that taking what belongs to others is okay.