

Empowering Teens



**An Online Supplement
for Social Emotional Learning
by**

MPOWERD®

The Voices of this Generation

Before you begin...

These ten challenges are some of the most common subjects that teens bring up in discussion groups. The following sections ask you to read, reflect and respond to the topics presented.

Teens are given an opportunity to share their voices, strengthened by their similarities while gaining insight from their differences.

Personal empowerment becomes a teen's reality as each invests in commitment to processing the issues, committing to change, and creating priorities in life.

Note:

Protect your privacy by not including specific names and places in your responses. You can always refer to the moment, the person or place without specific identification.

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CHALLENGES

LISTENING

Perspective:

It is about learning when to “let go” of those moments that we can do nothing about.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Perspective:

Understanding our own value as a person affects our tolerance and commitment to others.

DEPRESSION

Perspective:

Emotional stability is crucial to function in life. It takes work.

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Perspective:

Recognizing relationships that are not healthy is part of survival.

ADD/ADHD

Perspective:

Sensory experiences effect our behavior and focus.

ANGER/VIOLENCE/BULLIES

Perspective:

Anger is a natural response. It is necessary for survival but needs to be controlled.

ANXIETY AND STRESS

Perspective:

Understanding why we respond mentally and physically to our own fear factors.

ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR

Perspective:

Identifying habits that cause personal harm is part of everyone's lifetime journey.

GRIEF

Perspective: Working through losses is part of our life experience and includes the element of time.

PERSONAL POWER

Perspective:

How do I give embrace personal empowerment?

Read a small segment
Reflect on the thoughts presented
Respond on the lines provided

If possible...

Share your thoughts with another

Challenge 1

Listening and Letting go

Sometimes, when we are disappointed or angry at someone or even ourselves, we allow a simple moment to become a huge weight that we carry with us throughout the day. What started as a misunderstanding or even an argument becomes monumental. This happens because we become frustrated as we relive the moment again and again. It's hard to focus, enjoy life or even connect with friends or family. It feels like there is no way out.

This is a time for each of us to simply stop and make a decision. Are we going to allow these emotions to control us or will we make a conscious decision about what really "matters", assess what we can't change and simply "let go". If we allow negative experiences "to beat us up" and ignore the good that surrounds us, those positives (a great moment, a good laugh, an achievement) will probably come and we'll miss out them.

**"Letting go" involves looking objectively
at those conversations and confrontations
that continue to**

diminish the quality of our lives.

**We then need to make a decision to either accept what
we can and cannot change and move forward.**

What is most important, speaking or listening?

The importance of speaking well and communicating clearly is emphasized throughout our education, but how significant is it to be a good, no, make that a great listener? It may be the most important quality that a human being has to offer another person and to succeed in life.

Who listens to teens the most? Why do you suppose they do?

Who listens to teens the least? Do you know why?

Do people listen to each other in most families?

Why do people have a hard time simply listening to each other?

How do emotions get in the way of listening?

Do we communicate with each other?

Arguments come in all sizes and shapes, sometimes it becomes necessary to use a format in which both parties can agree to participate.

Here is a simple strategy that can work in mediations, whether it is about a conflict between gangs or groups, parents vs. teens, teachers vs. students, teen vs. teen, etc. The format needs to be followed exactly. No exceptions. Check it out.

Conflict Resolution Rules:

- 1. Each person agrees to treat the other respectfully, both through body language.***
- 2. Each person may speak for three minutes about their concerns. The other person may only listen and needs to do so with attention given to the other individual.***
- 3. When the next person has a chance to speak, the same rules apply. That person may address issues that the other person has stated but does so without accusing or putting that person on the defensive.***
- 4. "I" statements are encouraged when discussing and expressing personal emotions. Example: "I felt really angry when you thought that I had ignored you before I had a chance to explain."***
- 5. The mediation continues until both parties begin to find ways to understand the other's perspective, or until all that needs to be said is said.***
- 6. Both parties try to reach some resolution that each feel is fair.***
- 7. A third party (the mediator) is often included to monitor the mediation and ensure that all rules are followed.***

Note: If, at any time, one person interrupts or does not follow the rules, the mediator has the right to say that the mediation is over until both parties are willing to cooperate during the process.

Teens are best at following rules for mediations.

Now, this process doesn't sound so impossible, does it? When two parties put their emotions aside and take time to talk through an issue, conflicts can be resolved. We are all limited by knowing just one perspective, our own, and we often forget the value of listening. Conversations are often a series of personal assaults and exaggerations. Active listening and controlled communication can clarify the issues.

In addition, when someone says something that you don't like or agree with, the best way to stay calm is to realize that you don't own their opinions, they do. That is what listening is about. Both sides will share their interpretation of the experience. The conversation creates insight into how both sides experience the problem as they offer individual perspectives.

How can someone really tell that another person is genuinely listening to them?

**Why do people sometimes REFUSE to listen to another person?
When does this happen?**

**Only two committed and chemically free individuals/parties
may attempt mediation with any sense of
hope or credibility.**

Why is it important for people to be mentally "open minded" during mediation or life in general?

What usually happens if both people aren't willing to listen when trying to resolve a conflict?

Why is it important to have a mature attitude during a mediation? What does that include?

Staying Calm in the Storm

We all react differently to people and experiences in our lives. Life is about learning to "let go" of those times that consume us. "Choosing your battles" is an old saying, but really is a lifetime process that demands each person's attention if there is going to be any sense of personal peace. If someone is causing you serious emotional stress, then the situation needs to be discussed with a mentor, parent or trusted adult. But, if it is just about an angry moment, we need to refocus on the positives.

Taking control of your life means to adjust your thought processes.

When you go to bed at night, do you ever “spin your wheels”, meaning that you think about that one person or action that made you angry, and you live it and relive it a hundred times over? Does it ever go away? Most likely not.... unless you fall asleep.... if you can.

***Make a conscious decision to focus on
the positives.***

***Block out the moments that
are taking “hope out of life”.***

***Move forward knowing
that you are “enough”.***

***We are the worst
at finding fault with who we are.
It’s time to treat ourselves with respect.***

***Take time to think about what you do each day
that has value.***

Small moments add up to great individuals.

The conversations that we have in our heads needs to focus on the positive. Self-talk works! It’s about letting go and admitting that every day isn’t going to be perfect, and tomorrow is another opportunity for a fresh start. You can make it happen. It just takes practice. Believe in you and discard the rest.