

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".

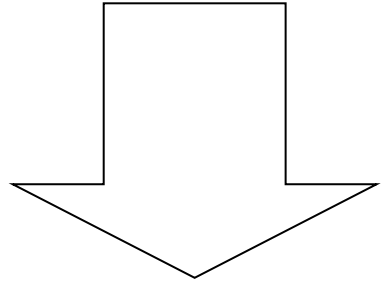
We are the worst at finding fault with who we are. It's time to treat ourselves with respect.

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.

Challenge 2



Healthy Relationships

Relationships mean different things to each person. To some, it is an experiment in life. Others use them as a type of conquest. Many feel that it is “a rite of passage” and is simply what is “supposed” to happen at this point in a teen’s life. There are those who think that this is a time to discover love, however they define it. Finally, others are simply not ready to commit their time and effort in one person.

When do you think teens start feeling pressured to have a girlfriend or boyfriend?

With so many different feelings attached to relationships, it’s easy to see how everyone can get hurt at one time or other. Emotions can start off as being great and euphoric feeling and then turn into a really painful experience. **Give an example of when a relationship can turn into a serious crisis for a teen.**

Relationships vs. Friendships

Many teens will say that relationships are more trouble than they are worth. They enjoy freedom without having to be accountable to another person “24-7”. They would prefer to rely on friendships. Some teens feel that friends are more reliable, not nearly as demanding and, in general, are committed to far less drama.

What qualities are important to have in your friends? Describe the perfect friend.

Why are teens more selective about friends in high school as opposed to when they were younger.

How important is a good friend especially during the challenges today?

Opposite personalities sometimes create close friendships, like a person who is loud and obnoxious has a close friend who is quiet and serious. A teen who is a great student might connect with someone who is only interested in sports and cares less about grades. A shy teen might connect with a confident and outgoing friend.

Why do think that opposite personalities are sometimes a good combination?

What is the most difficult part of friendship for most people?

Time to CHOOSE

Each person is a unique individual who is a combination of personal choices, cultural norms, and family influences (both traditional and non-traditional). We also have different skill sets, goals, intelligence levels and personalities. But what if we could choose to maximize our life experiences within a new life style. Here is a chance to imagine for a moment that this very choice is in your hands.

You may want to have both experiences or neither, but you need to select one and try to envision the life that you would experience. What would be the optimal experience within the choice that you make?

Would you rather be a super athlete or a famous musician? Why?

Would you rather be president of a country or a movie star? Why?

**Would you rather be a rock/country star or a famous scientist?
Why?**

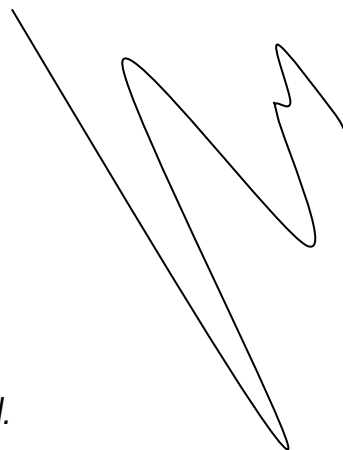
**Would you rather be Superman or Jeff Bezos (Amazon president)?
Why?**

**Would you choose to work with Bill Gates, Lady Gaga or Mother
Theresa (when she was alive)? Why?**

Challenge 3

Depression

*Depression is painful.
Depression is often misunderstood.
Depression is disabling.*



Millions of adolescents, as well as adults, are dealing with the effects of depression, which controls their relationships, their academic achievement, job success, their family relationships, and their own sense of well-being. The inability to cope with daily routine becomes huge as people struggle to find a way through this illness. Since many of our youth are "over or under" diagnosed, teens and parents aren't sure where to turn in terms of support.

Several of the most painful elements of depression include the sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, and despair. Often times, through personal interaction, intervention and discussion, teens can begin to understand why depression feels so suffocating and find a means to reach out for help.

What facts do you know about depression? Have you ever heard someone talk about it before?

Sometimes depression makes us feel alone, completely alone, maybe we feel physically tired and very misunderstood by everyone. It seems as if no one really gets where we are coming from, and most of the time, neither do we. If these feelings seem to be a constant part of your life and you continue to feel "shut down" or "shut out", you may be experiencing depression.

Because we all deal with a ton of emotions on a daily basis, this may be a good time to decide if we need to try and work through any sadness that feels ongoing. Is this just a tough moment and it will pass, or do I need to think about some positive changes or resources that can help improve the quality of my life?

Here's another way to think about how depression feels.

Imagine the most exceptional vehicle on the road. It could be a sports car, a great-looking truck, a Ferrari or Lamborghini. And you own it. It belongs 100% to you.

Describe your choice. Details like make, color and performance should be included.

The Battery

Today you go out to start your car. Everyone who passes your vehicle, thinks that it looks amazing. The color is brilliant, the shine is like a mirror and the style is a perfect choice. But for whatever reason, it won't start this morning. In fact, there are many days when you can't get it to run. You turn the key and the engine doesn't always turn over. You really aren't sure what is wrong. Everything looks perfect, but for whatever reason, the vehicle simply won't start.

Your vehicle's battery has the job of storing its electrical energy, power that is needed to ignite the starter and keep your car running. A weak or dead battery will leave you stranded, while a healthy car battery will perform the functions and get it going.

You decide that since everything else looks great, it must be the battery. You realize that it is out of "juice", the chemicals needed to create the connection to the engine.

Now let's compare ourselves to our favorite vehicle. We look great on the outside and appear to be in total control. But, for whatever reason, we feel "shut down" inside. We try to get started in the morning but some days it feels nearly impossible. People assume that we can function, but we continuously shut down. Many times, we don't even know why. We simply lose the ability to move forward.

Have you ever known someone who looks like his/her life is perfect, but then you find out that they are actually struggling every day? Without giving any information about the person's identity, what did you find about him or her?

When someone is depressed, nerve cells are unable to transmit the impulse to the brain that helps us to cope. These natural impulses provide the "charge" that helps human beings handle day to day experiences. They allow us to "pick ourselves up" and give us a sense of energy that feels like a natural part of our existence. It doesn't mean that we will always feel super charged, but we may feel more capable of pulling our lives together and "problem solve" more easily.

When you are depressed, your battery is out of juice, and you (just like your vehicle) aren't able to run efficiently, no matter how hard you try. It's important to find a healthy means to produce the energy needed to get you back to normal, to help you move past your sadness and to find the motivation to get through your day.

When people feel down, what are ways that you suggest could help them through a sad moment or a disappointing situation?

What to do

Sometimes, we may have to change our lifestyles, cut down on the late hours, stay away from partying, try to eat healthy, and create time for physical activity. It's also important to have someone to share our feelings, someone who is a good listener, sound familiar? These are just a few methods that can be a natural means of creating more energy and balance in our daily lives.

Ideas for personal change always sound easy on paper, but if it was that easy, we'd all be doing it. Who doesn't want to be happy? Change is hard and breaking habits seem impossible. We often don't know how to assess our feelings. Therefore, we become frustrated, get disengaged and feel that there is no way out.

The Well

Depression becomes its own world because we tend to shut out the life that we know and all the emotions that comes with it. It's like stepping into a well. Carefully, we edge down the sides where it is darker, and the world slips further away. Eventually, we hit the bottom and we stay there because it hides us from dealing with our problems.

Sometimes, depression finds that sleep is a favorite escape, and instead of using that time to relax and rebuild our strength, it becomes a way to block out the pain. It feels comforting not to have to face people, the challenges in life and, most importantly, ourselves. Yet, it simply is a place to hide. We need to find support to move past depression.

Did you know that depression is not just about sadness, but also enables higher levels of anger to consume us? Why would you guess that might happen?



When people experience depression, they are often unable to deal with their frustrations, and find that anger is forever controlling their behavior. The smallest things can make them rage. Friends and family start to withdraw from them to avoid confrontation. It's like having an elephant in the house. Everyone stays out of the way.

People often prefer to stay alone, like crawling into a cavern or down the sides of a well. Friends slowly disappear; parents and siblings are uncomfortable to be around; school is frustrating as grades are slipping and the quality of life seems to be fading away. You are hoping for some kind of change, but you aren't sure how to make it happen. Now, this is the important part. There is always a way out.

At the top of the well, you see a light try to break through. You hear voices calling your name. No matter how much you may try to ignore them, they won't go away. Hands are reaching down to you, but you don't know how to climb up to where it is safe. They are there to help you find your way. You edge your way up to the top, and feel arms lifting you to a safe place.

Dealing with Down Times/ Getting through the hard times

1. Start a journal. Write about your day. Decide on the form. Maybe it will be poetry, a drawing, a song, a story. Commit time to create a reflection of each experience, along with the emotions that you felt. If it was an extremely tough moment, and your work is full of anger, then rip it into tiny pieces and throw them into the trash after you finish, so that you can try to forget your pain.
2. Physical Exercise creates its own positive feelings. Any form of aerobic exercise will release serotonin and other endorphins, which can lead to a feeling of wellbeing. Endorphins and neurotransmitters are produced in the pituitary gland and throughout the nervous system and will increase the body's natural pain medication. Work on exercising 10 minutes a day, then build up to an hour. Running, working out, dancing, jumping rope, playing sports, whatever. It helps the body and mind to heal.
3. Create some "down" time, not like sad time, but time in your own space. Read a great book or magazine that has your interest. Put on some mellow music that allows you to "space out" and lets your body relax. Force yourself to empty your mind and fill it with a positive image, a soothing ocean, a breathtaking mountain, a brilliant sky, holding it inside as you focus on a positive moment.

4. Take time for an old friend. Make sure that this friend is a positive person. It could be a relative, a neighbor or someone whom you've missed talking to in school. Connect with that person and check up on them. Ask about the day, feelings, thoughts. Create a path to communication. It may be tough if it has been a while, but it might be a chance to build that relationship that you've missed.
5. Eat healthy food. Cut out some of your sugar intake as it sets you up for emotional and physical highs and lows. Find something that is a better substitute. Salad and pizza might be a good start. Try drinking milk or water instead of soda or finding some protein snacks. Unhealthy food can be a catalyst behind the lack of energy, an inability to relax, mood swings, chronic sleepiness or other health disorders. Monitor your allergies as well.
6. Find a way to do some "Acts of Kindness". You may not believe it, but when you do nice things for others, it really makes your life better. When you take the time to support another human being, you feel a certain sense of joy and accomplishment. There is nothing better than knowing that you have made someone's day better. This idea comes with a guarantee. Find a place to volunteer time with children, the elderly, or individuals with special needs.
7. Find an animal who needs a friend. Animals know only how to love us and that's exactly what we all need. They make us feel important when we feel helpless. They make us feel valued when we struggle to believe in ourselves. They offer no judgment, only unconditional love.

Further questions

What do you think is the difference between depression and just feeling sad?

What are other reasons that cause people to get depressed?

Why is it important to talk to a counselor, parent, or mentor if the depression doesn't go away?

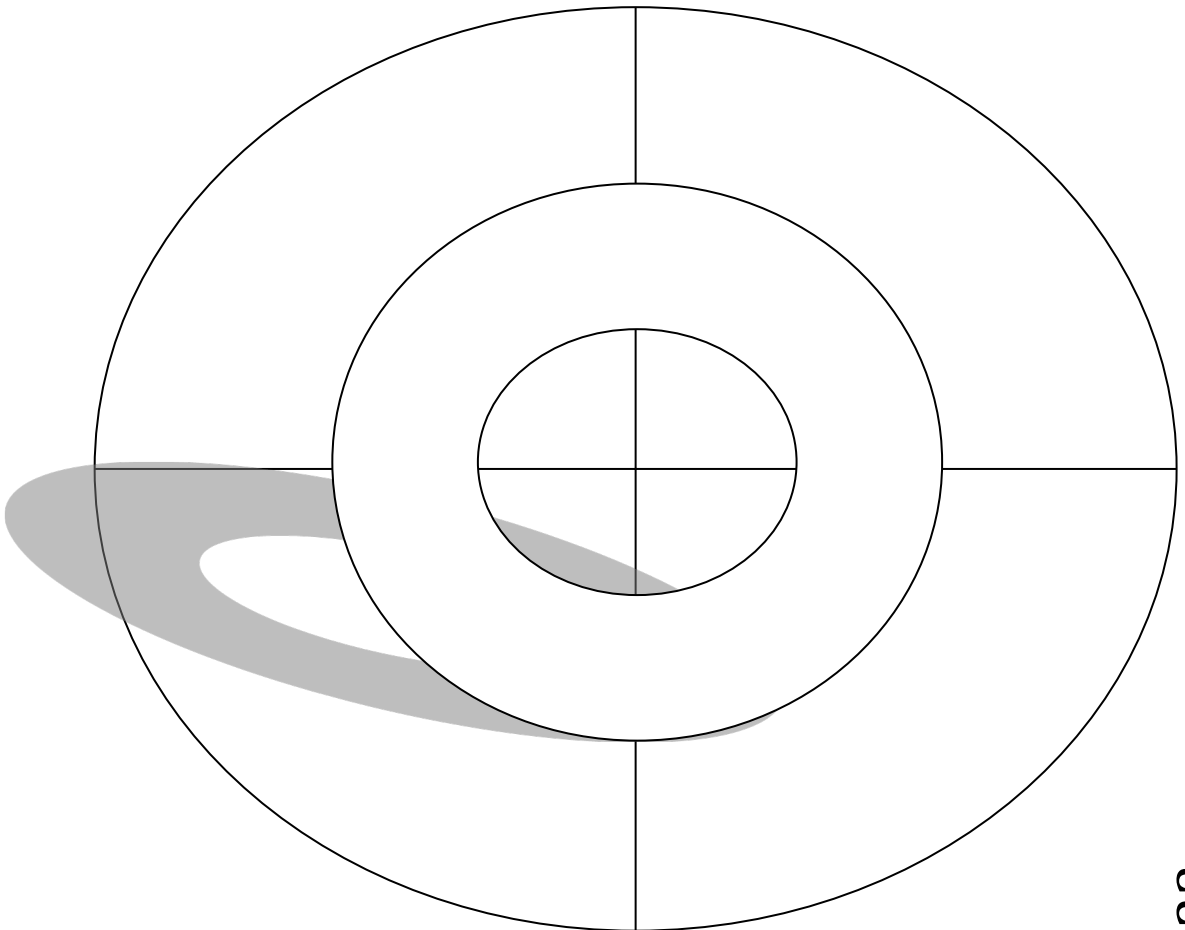
Explain to a friend why there is always hope when you are going through a tough time.

Depression can be a hereditary condition. Perhaps a parent, grandparent or sibling could be going through a similar experience. We often avoid talking about emotional challenges in a family. It may not be their moods, their emotional outbursts, and their sadness without any support, but the reality is that we need each other.

Where do you think teens would go at your school to find a resource for help and advice?

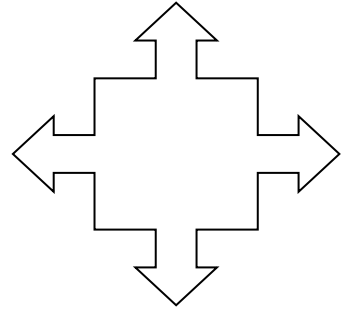
YOU and YOUR CIRCLE

- *You are in the inner circle. Write words in that circle that describe you. They can be adjectives or clues to who you are.*
- *In the 4 sections within the inner circle, put 4 names of the people you communicate with the most.*
- *On the outside circle, write four parts of life that you interact with every day. (examples might include family, school, friends, sports, clubs, video games, social media etc.) Put symbols and words.*
- *If you had a chance to change the places and people in your life, what names or words would you change in this diagram? Cross them out and replace them with a better choice for you.*



Challenge 4

Abuse



***Abuse in any relationship can be physical, sexual, or emotional.
None are acceptable.
None are the fault of the victim.
None should be tolerated.***

Rule #1:

If someone harms you in any way, such as: slapping, shaking, twisting, kicking, punching, etc., you need to get out of the relationship. This behavior will only escalate through time and could cause you serious emotional damage as well. It's important to always feel safe and unthreatened.

How could these actions indicate symptoms of bullying?

Rule #2:

If someone tries to control your actions, your choices, and your behavior, you need to let him/her know that you are in charge of your own life. Although there should be compromise in any relationship, it is crucial that each person has the right to their own opinion without feelings of guilt.

Why do some people try to control the decisions of others?

Rule #3:

If someone continues to humiliate you or make you feel uncomfortable or foolish in front of others, he/she is trying to boost his/her own self-esteem by making you look "less than". Relationships thrive by building up each other's sense of self, not destroying it.

How can you tell if someone has hurt another person through their sarcasm or comments? When does it become more than just joking around?

Rule #4:

If someone constantly attacks you verbally or physically because of constant jealousy, you need to be cautious. Often times, teens will say that at first jealousy "lets them know that someone really cares about them." However, jealousy is destructive. It takes away your personal freedom and allows someone to control your life. Each person should have the ability to have friends of both sexes, a time to be with them, and a sense of space. Friendships are an individual's choice.

Why is jealousy often associated with someone's poor self-concept or lack of self-esteem?

Rule #5:

If someone threatens to harm you if you leave the relationship, you should sense that the person's threats are a sign of mental instability. You need to let your friends and family know of your fears. If this person does not allow you to move on, then you may need to get a restraining order. If the threat is real, it is considered a criminal act.

When can you tell if a threat feels dangerous versus from when it is just a moment of anger?

Rule #6

If someone makes you feel accountable for their decisions, it may be a form of emotional abuse. People often like to blame others for what they did. It takes away their guilt and makes YOU the responsible party. It may continue when they threaten you with their self-destructive habits so that they can control and manipulate your behavior.

Why do people often resort to blaming others for their mistakes?

Rule #7

No one should feel obligated to have any kind of relationship with another person unless they so choose. Forced sexual activity is a crime. Bullying, harassment, and intimidation to perform any type of sexual act needs to be reported to a parent, school counselor or adult mentor. A person has the right to say “no” at any time.

Is sexual harassment common on social media? How can it impact the victim?

***We are meant to be part of a social community,
experiencing friendships and relationships in life.
It is crucial, however, that in any type of association,
that there is mutual respect.
Both people need to respect the other person's priorities.
Relationships are about mutual appreciation,
celebrating common interests and
accepting imperfections (that are not abusive).
We also need to continue to create a balance in life that includes
maintaining other friends, sharing activities,
and creating experiences
that enable us to be independent and empowered.***

When someone is in an abusive relationship, it takes a great amount of courage to step away from it. Usually, abusive people are so controlling, that it is hard for the victim to see the damage that is taking place. Because the abuser has made the victim feel guilty and ashamed, along with being insecure and fearful, it is usually necessary for the victim to find support from a family member, mentor, or within a professional support system.

Why do people stay in relationships that aren't necessarily good for them?

Why is it dangerous for people to stay in an abusive relationship, not just today, but in terms of their future?

Personal boundaries are important for each us to practice. Those are imaginary lines that say that certain behaviors are unacceptable. How can personal boundaries keep peoples safe?

Rule #8

If someone neglects you, in terms of providing basic safety, health care, supervision, nutrition, emotional support, education, housing, etc. one may experience physical, social, and emotional neglect. Not all parents are able to provide those systems that are crucial because of poverty or mental instability. Nevertheless, teens need support for a healthy life and should find resources at school to help their families.

How can we support our friends who aren't raised in stable homes and possibly suffer with hunger and possible abuse?

To reach the highest level of personal empowerment means that we have found the confidence, self-respect and compassion to reach out to others in our community. What does this statement mean to you?

Challenge 5

ADD/ADHD

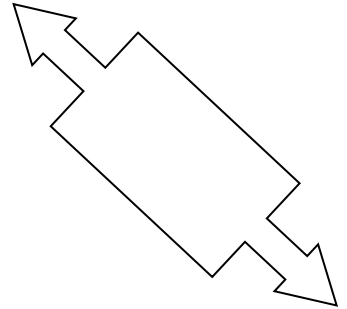
You will succeed!!!

A person with Attention Deficit Disorder is defined as "an individual who has difficulty concentrating, showing disorganization and impulsiveness." Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder includes the former symptoms and adds "overactive behavior".

Most children come into this world encouraged and supported for being inquisitive with diverse interests and impulsiveness. The child then attends school and discovers that his/her spontaneity is now often considered inappropriate. The child's need for activity along with an inability to focus become the challenges. Parents question whether these personality traits and behavior are just a normal part of maturation or are going to be a lifelong issue.

The teacher and the parent then become concerned because the child cannot focus and struggles to perform within a class of thirty other students. Learning basic skills becomes a challenge. Now the child's confidence and inquisitive nature are replaced with insecurity and a lack of self-esteem within an inability to focus.

Research on ADHD, states that there is a link between various levels of dopamine in the brain, which is a gene that affects the brain's relationship to performance. This difference causes teens to constantly crave stimulus and seek multiple sensory experiences.



Can feeling “hyper” ever create a positive feeling? Why?

Can feeling “hyper” ever be a negative? When?

Labeling a Teen

Teens who are labeled or diagnosed with ADD/ADHD are often led to believe that they aren’t smart, can’t perform and see little hope for their future. These confusing messages are detrimental to the development of any person. And, more importantly, they are completely wrong.

Teens can learn how to manage their assignments and daily expectations, but it takes support from both family members and educators to help them work through the process. Teens need minimal distractions to complete an assignment.

This takes a commitment from teachers to ensure that the student is placed in an area in the class that has less movement and fewer voices, usually in the front, on the far left or right side. Parents need to create a “study time” in the house where music, tv and phones are shut off. Less distraction creates better focus.

Organizing notebooks, backpacks, workbooks, etc. can alleviate a great deal of pressure. It may involve a certain strategy for completing assignments, a plan for providing planned or written directions as reminders. All these efforts may be a catalyst or new beginning for creating success and confidence.

How important is “organization” to you in terms of getting the job done?
How does anyone create a schedule where one can do well in school,
take care of any responsibilities at home or work and still keep
connected with your friends?

If you could suggest three important ways to stay focused in school, what would you suggest?

Whether you are diagnosed with ADD/ADHD or not, it is common for teens to be distracted when trying to learn. You may be a person who is annoyed by the hum of a computer, students talking during lectures, paper being crunched, the tapping of a pencil, the interruption of an announcement.

What are other distractors happen in class when you are trying to learn and challenge your concentration?

ADD/ADHD makes it difficult to learn and process in a traditional setting. However, most individuals find their niche when given the opportunity to invest in what they love. Their skills in communication often surpass the norm. They usually make friends easily as they are often outgoing, personable and share a positive sense of energy.

Remember that many of the artists, actors, rock stars, musicians, business investors, sales and marketing distributors, computer programmers, etc. have had to be more creative, more open to stimulus, more charismatic and more inventive than the average person. Many of these characteristics belong to someone with ADD.

These brilliant achievers have/had ADD/ADHD. All were known for either their amazing personal success and/or their contributions to the world.

Check these out:

Alexander Graham Bell - inventor of the telephone.

Simone Biles - Olympian gold medal winner in gymnastics.

Thomas Edison - inventor of electric power, mass communication, sound recording and motion pictures.

Albert Einstein - considered one of the two pillars of modern physics. Created his mass-energy equivalence $E=mc^2$, which has been dubbed “the world’s most famous equation”, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics.

Benjamin Franklin - author, politician, scientist, inventor, statesman and diplomat.

Bill Gates - developed an operating system for personal computers as the co-founder of Microsoft. Currently the second wealthiest man in the world.

Cammi Granato - Olympian gold medal winner in women’s ice hockey, scoring the most goals for women historically.

Michael Jordan - listed as “by acclamation, the greatest basketball player of all time” by the National Basketball Association (NBA).

Lisa Ling - award-winning journalist and tv producer.

Andrea McDonald - winner of the most Tony Awards in Broadway performances.

Wolfgang Mozart - brilliant and influential composer from the Classical Period.

Michael Phelps - most successful and decorated Olympian of all time.
Event: swimming

Emma Watson - actress known for her leading role in Harry Potter.
Graduated from Brown University and is a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador.

Which one of these achievers do you admire most? Why did you choose him or her?

There are multiple success stories from individuals who learned to address their diagnosis and to manage the part of their lives impacted from being ADD/ADHD. A medical evaluation from a professional practitioner may be part of the journey to ensure choices in life. There are both challenges and advantages to consider within this condition.

Here are suggested occupations that report that individuals with ADD/ADHD can be excellent contributors and have unique skill sets to ensure ongoing success:

Entrepreneur - someone who creates, organizes, and operates a business. Willing to invest time and energy within a financial investment. Entrepreneurs enjoy jobs that are challenging, rewarding, and ever-changing while offering an escape from the usual office routine.

Sales - involve a certain adrenaline rush because each day is unique and different. Clients continuously change, conditions are diverse and problem solving presents constant challenges.

Food Industry - cooking, creating parties, decorating, a general mix of creativity and instant gratification. Hours are sporadic, work is busy and customer service involves good communication skills.

Teachers - employ many skills to adapt to a class of individuals with unique talents and needs. Optimal opportunity to invest outreach and support to kids who need positive, upbeat energy.

Firefighters, nurses, police officers - resilient, invested in the moment, adaptable and willing to face challenges. Never bored with multiple variations in job expectations.

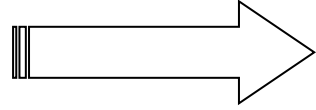
What other jobs do you think are available to energetic, creative, and communicative personalities?

If you were trying to convince your brother, who supposedly has ADHD, to stay in school, what would you say to convince him?

Everyone has a unique learning style. Some students need music and distraction to stay stimulated to learn. Some find that they are auditory learners, meaning that they can retain what they hear. Others need visual reinforcement, such as: notes, powerpoint, handouts, books, videos, etc.

What do you think is the ultimate way to teach students when they have so many diverse ways to learn?

Challenge 6



Anger

Anger is a natural, healthy emotional response that is vital for all human beings to express in terms of personal survival. It carries its own sense of energy that can actually be used for good purposes.

Anger helps us to set personal boundaries, which is an important process that establishes guidelines for our relationships with others. When we define our boundaries as individuals, we decide what is acceptable in terms of physical interaction, communication, and general privacy. When we recognize that someone has overstepped our boundaries and invaded our space, anger is the natural reaction in our defense.

How important is it for teens to be able to express their anger and feelings in a safe environment? Why?

Anger, without control, can be destructive and dangerous. Since the range in this emotion can begin with a small irritation and end with violence, it's important to understand how to recognize and control this emotion.

People respond to various situations in different ways. Emotions are based on personalities, life experiences and personal interpretations. We naturally feel upset or angry when we are frustrated, especially when we sense that people are insensitive, uncaring, thoughtless, and often times abusive.

What do you think are some of the other reasons or situations that anger teens in general?

Anger can also be counterproductive. Often times, people use anger to “get back at” or punish another person who has upset them. It can be overpowering and take away rational thought. Sometimes, it becomes an emotional state called rage, which is when someone loses complete control. It is often a response to extreme hurt or threat.

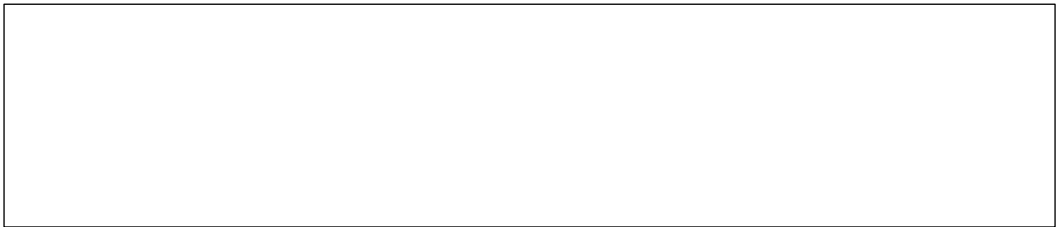
People experience a mental and emotional response in these situations and feel intense physical change as well. Heart rates, blood pressure and adrenaline spikes will often trigger what is called the “fight or flight response”. “Fight” meaning that when people anger us, we choose to attack them verbally or physically, whereas “flight” implies that we avoid the confrontation and create distance between us and the person or situation. In either case, the issues will remain unresolved until there is an opportunity for both sides to reach some type of understanding.

Give an example of a time when it would be smart to “take off” and not confront someone when their anger is out of control.

Initially, anger may feel completely justified and it may very well be. People can be extremely cruel, and our natural instinct is to respond in the same manner. However, once we show that we have lost control in the situation, we lose our power. By staying calm, ignoring the offender, or simply walking away, we are refusing to be a part of the conversation or even the moment.

We could shout and rage in response, or worse, as the level of adrenaline increases inside both sides. This usually leads to an uncontrolled confrontation. Nothing is usually resolved when both parties are out of control. Usually, the situation escalates along with the original conflict.

How do some situations escalate to the point of rage?



No one has the right to take away our ability to feel angry, but we are all responsible to take control of our anger and learn to express it in a way that is productive and improves the quality of life.

What kinds of harm can't be fixed when someone has lost control because of anger?



Taking charge of our anger

There are various ways of approaching anger that are effective within different types of experiences.

It is important to be assertive with your anger, meaning that you are very clear that something is upsetting you, when and if that is possible. Being assertive does not mean that you are hurtful, in fact, it means just the opposite. It infers that you get your point across while being respectful of another as well as yourself.

Trying to suppress your anger is not healthy. If we don't discuss our feelings or try to resolve an issue, we usually "stuff" our emotions, letting our frustration build up for another day. Anger wears us down as it continues to make our lives miserable. Or maybe we tend to take our anger out on some poor person who just happens to say the wrong thing at the wrong time, and they become our victim. Suppressing our feelings can eventually cause us to become more stressed, depressed, anxious, or begin to lose self-esteem.

Dealing with anger is definitely a learning process.

How do little children often deal with anger?

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How do adolescents often deal with anger? (ages 10-12)

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How do teens often deal with anger?

--

How do the adults in general handle anger?

“How I handle my own anger” is a good question that each of us should be asking ourselves. Have we evolved from the way a child would act or are we stuck in a tantrum mode and have never grown up? Most of us have been influenced by the adults who raised us. This could be a good or bad thing.

A Quick Check Might Help

After a confrontation, most of us question whether our anger is justified. We need to put space between ourselves and the offender to make sure that we are processing the situation correctly. If we aren’t certain that our anger is justified, we may want to ask ourselves:

Was I being too emotional or sensitive? Was the other person just kidding around and I was in a bad mood in the first place?

Was the person going through a bad time and needed to vent? Should I be more patient with what he/she is going through?

Was it both of our faults? Did I come across with an attitude that made the situation worse? What did I do to cause him/her to get angry?

We also need to remember that no one is perfect. We have all had conflicts when we have had to exercise great control, and carefully select our actions and words without getting ourselves into trouble. Sometimes, we do a great job and other times, we wish that we could replay that moment again.

Responding to anger may be based on a survival mode and how people in our lives are “heard”. If our parents/guardians rage and shout, then we will most likely follow their habits. If someone is allowed to physically strike another, then the victim sees that as a norm, and will often justify striking another person in similar situations.

Is it possible for teens to break the cycle of violence in their own lives? How would they begin?

A Review

1. When we feel that our anger is getting out of control, we will need to find some space.

Simply moving away from the situation or person, may be the best choice depending on the circumstances. Keep your body language in check and stay calm. You might say that you have some things that you need to think about and want a few moments to yourself.

2. Often people are tired or exhausted when they lose their temper.

Ok, you have had a rough day. Maybe it was full of confrontation. Or maybe you are still carrying the heartache from last week, or the grief from last year. Disappointments and devastation in life weigh heavily on people, and sometimes it takes awhile to sort through them. It's important to recognize what is causing us to "push back".

3. If certain phrases, individuals, or attitudes ruin your day, try to avoid them.

Whenever possible, stay around people who are positive. There are enough negatives that we can't avoid or control. Create the best environment when possible. You may choose to sit next to a different group at lunch, or take a different route home, or avoid students who are "trouble" in class. Work on making your life easier.

4. Try calming yourself down.

Take some big breaths. Count off to yourself from one to five or make that ten before you respond. Say *"Calm down"* to yourself internally. *"This isn't worth getting out of control."*

Or change your internal language from, *"I hate this day,"* to *"Ok, this is a bummer, but I can live through this."*

How about from *"I hate you"* to *"This isn't working."* This is not about letting a person "off" but holding on to your own power and not turning it over to another.

5. The more that you acknowledge your anger, address it with the person or situation and maintain a sense of control, the easier it is to let it go.

Anger, without some restraint, overtakes one's whole being, and makes life miserable. We've all been there. It also affects the lives of those whom you care about. An angry family member can ruin the best day, the happiest experience, and the greatest achievement.

Be selective about what you allow to make you angry. Yes, we do have a choice. Make sure that it is important enough to respond to, and then do so with some thought behind it.

6. Work on tolerance and forgiveness.

No matter how unjust or unfair a situation is, our anger must be directed to productive and positive action. We can sit and complain, or we can create a plan for change. We can hate or we can try to understand our differences and begin to forgive. We can do nothing and allow the situation to continue and get worse, or we can believe in positive change and make a better choice.

What is one idea that every teen can do today to create a better world in terms of the anger and injustice that people experience?

Anger can lead to



Violence and Bullying

Violence causes more injury and death in children, teenagers, and young adults than infectious disease, cancer, or birth trauma. Nearly one in three young people between the ages of 14 and 20 are involved with violent dating behaviors. Teens, who were bullied as children, are seven times more likely to be part of an abusive relationship (AMA).

Bullies are all about control. They participate in forms of harassment, discrimination, prejudice, abuse, persecution, conflict, and violence. Because they threaten their victims, they often remain unidentified.

Most bullies have low self-confidence, are insecure, and actually have their own fear factor. As a result they continuously try to control others and victimize those who cannot defend themselves. They are manipulative and deceptive. Their world is about surrounding themselves with like-minded followers, who often choose to exploit others as well.

Bullying comes in various experiences, actions and relationships, including:

- criticizing
- ridiculing
- ignoring and rejecting
- threatening someone with force/weapons
- inflicting unwanted sexual behavior
- humiliating
- creating social media attacks
- intimidating

What else would you add to this list?

Do you feel that bullies need help as well? What would help them to find a reason and a way to change? Is it possible?

What types of behavior from bullies makes you the most angry?

Sometimes, we are the bullies. Do you think that it is possible for someone to be a bully and not even know it? Give an example.

Can we take a stand against bullying together?

Teens undoubtedly have the best ideas for supporting peers and to problem solve when there are conflicts. What suggestions, advice or direction would you offer in the following situations? These examples are typical of life experiences.

Your cousin is becoming more and more depressed. Some of the “mean girls” make fun of her and create videos on social to humiliate her. How can you support her?

One of your good friends is afraid of a bully in class. This person hangs out with his gang, steals your friend’s money, books, and threatens to beat him up if he says anything. Your friend needs help. Does he have any options?

Some “jocks” have chosen your brother as their next victim. It doesn’t matter what he does, they humiliate him, especially because sports are not his thing. They target him at lunch. He hates coming to school and frequently hides out in hallways, in the office or behind buildings. Is there anything you can do?

Avoid bullying and be safe

Check out the following:

- Be aware of what surrounds you within the place and time of day.
- Practice defensive moves if you need to get away from someone.
- Walk in groups when necessary.
- Believe in YOU. You have the right to personal freedom.
- Bring together those who are being harassed. Defend them when possible.
- Find a mentor, coach, teacher, relative, who can help you find the support that you need.
- Create a campaign on campus with resources to address bullying issues.
- Generate a student group to make posters, announcements and bring speakers to classes to create awareness.
- institute a lunch watch to make sure that teens take notice of who is eating alone, seems withdrawn, or looks afraid.

Write a poem, a song, or a message as a response to bullying.

Title:

Challenge 7

Anxiety/Stress

Experiencing occasional anxiety and stress is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense and constant worry with fear that becomes consuming. When you can't seem to break through your nervousness and apprehension, and the anxiety is overwhelming, you could be experiencing a panic attack.

Feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with our lives and are difficult to control. They can start when we are children and continue into our adult years. Examples of experiencing anxiety may include: fear of tests, driving, social situations, speeches, being apart from someone, heights, even being afraid of the dark, etc. There are thousands of examples, as each person reacts to situations differently.

What are some of the fears that other teens experience that can cause stress and anxiety?

With the pressures of school, social media, peer relationships and family challenges, it is no wonder that everyone doesn't experience stress and anxiety at one time or another. It's important to understand how these two behaviors or conditions impact our lives and what we can do to control them.

Stress and anxiety are both negative emotional experiences that can cause confusion and trauma in your life. While many people frequently use the terms stress and anxiety interchangeably, the two behaviors actually have different meanings.

Let's start with stress. Stress is your body's reaction to fear, disappointment, grief, frustration, etc. and happens when you feel that you don't have the ability to handle or face the situation that is confronting you. There is usually some type of fear factor attached to it.

Stress can trigger anxiety, which happens when a person experiences an excessive, persistent, and consuming sense of fear and apprehension. Physical symptoms are part of this challenge, including: breaking out in sweats, heart palpitations, trembling, dizziness, and breathing difficulties.

When people become more than just anxious and have continued panic attacks, the behavior is called an anxiety disorder. Those who have anxiety disorders have excessive and persistent worries and fears, even in situations that are not necessarily threatening to most other people. Yet, they are very real to them.

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health illnesses in the United States, with approximately 18 percent of the adult population living with one or more types of anxiety disorders.

Can you think of fears that some people have that you don't?

To avoid creating further stress and possible anxiety, there are ways to create some control in your life. Look over these options:

Identify those actions, expectations and situations that stress you out. Write them down in a safe place. Then write out a way to reasonably help yourself through it. Use your journal as a means to address those things that make you nervous and stressed out when they happen. Here's an example:

To help fear of tests:

- Make sure that you keep all notes on one place.
- Review your notes at the end of each day instead of just before the test so that they become part of your knowledge base.
- Find a friend to study with so that you can ask each other questions.
- Keep up with the homework every day. It will pay off.
- Ask your teacher for help when you get stuck on a problem/concept.
- Eat a good breakfast as it helps with brain activity.
- Try to exercise (a short run in the morning? or jogging in place?) to relieve your stress before class.

Try to be positive and not be judgmental of situations or people. Keeping an upbeat attitude allows you to laugh at yourself and discard any fears of what others are thinking. Know that everyone has embarrassing times and feels insecure just like you. If you act like something doesn't bother you, you will undoubtedly begin to believe it.

Keep your body healthy. Eat well and don't be stationary. Movement increases healing and positive endorphins which are the chemicals in the brain that make life appear to be more bearable.

Take care of yourself mentally. Most of us never take the time to commit to our mental health. Look on your phone for videos on exercising your brain and body through relaxation and controlled breathing. Then find a place in your mind to escape, such as a favorite place or scene (beach, mountain, sunset, etc.) and focus only on that moment. There is a reason that people with less stress have fewer heart attacks, less chance of certain diseases and most importantly, are happy.

It's important to stay connected with people. Sometimes, we need our space and want to be alone, but talking to another person who understands and cares about us is important for all of us. Life can undoubtedly be tough. We could all use a friend by our side.

Start thinking about how you manage your time. If you wait until the last minute to get somewhere or get something done, you are bound to be stressed out. Start early, arrive before the last minute, be overprepared so that nothing will hold you back.

Try taking some of your activities off your agenda if there just isn't enough time in the day to get it all done. Remember, you can't do it all.

Which of these ideas do you think would be most impactful in reducing stress for teens? Why?

Would you add anything to this list? Explain how it could help.

Social situations can be great stressors for anyone who wants to appear confident when they connect with others. What would you suggest to this person?

Every time Jason wants to talk to a girl that he has a crush on, his hands get clammy and he begins to stutter. He can never think of anything to say, seems to run short of breath, and can't keep any eye contact with her. He gets frustrated when he sees his friends talk to this girl all the time. Because he really likes her and hopes that she could be a possible girlfriend, he loses all confidence. In fact, he sometimes try to avoid her if she shows interest in him.

Jason is usually in the "flight" syndrome, always ready to take off and avoid the girl altogether. Then again, he is miserable because he can't get past his fear. Any suggestions that you could offer?

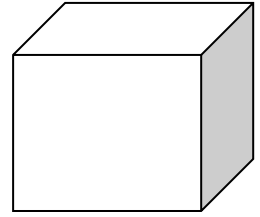
Choose power over fear

What kinds of challenges does your generation face that are unique to this time in history?

Why is your generation stronger, more insightful, and better able to handle the problems in our world and make a positive impact on the future?

If you could manage or alleviate an issue that your feel is the greatest stressor or threat to humanity right now, what would it be? Why?

Challenge 8



Addictive Behavior

Addictive behavior is when *any activity, object, or behavior, has become the “obsession” in a person’s life and, therefore, is causing harm.* Sometimes, it even starts as a healthy activity, such as running, eating habits, academic achievement, weightlifting, etc. But, whenever it becomes so repeated that it becomes a habit that a person can’t stop obsessing about, an imbalance occurs. We begin to ignore other priorities, including friends, families, and other personal incentives. Obsessive habits can be harmful to the individual, in terms of personal relationships, physical wellness and mental instability.

Most of us think about addictive behavior in relationship to using drugs/alcohol. Substance abuse certainly causes destruction on many levels. Evidence of physical and psychological dependency takes away incentives to achieve, while creating a loss of self. Addictive behavior causes us to act compulsively, which means acting without boundaries or rational thought, and are considered a threat to our well-being.

Can you think of an addictive behavior that is unusual? Example: ditching school, playing video games, driving fast, etc.

People can easily be addicted to texting, technology, eating or not eating, gambling, anger, relationships, working, not working, studying, and shopping, along with hundreds of other options. Any activity could potentially be a problem, if it becomes a habit that is out of control. Therefore, many of us look at these examples and think, “I could easily have several addictive behaviors.”

Can you think of anyone who might not have addictive behaviors?

You may also wonder if all addictive behaviors are as threatening as others. The response can only be answered by the individual. Everyone has habits that are just part of being human. People drink too much coffee, obsess about a celebrity, or are constantly taking in way too much sugar. Whether or not these actions become addictive behaviors depends on the frequency, dependency upon, and losses that occur within this behavior.

How does constantly “ditching school” become an addictive behavior?

Addictive behaviors come in all shapes and sizes. Some are obvious; some are well kept secrets. In order to maintain our personal power, we need to take charge of our lives when any habit makes us feel out of control. The hard part is admitting that there is a problem. Most of us like to feel that we are in charge of our lives, even when we are not. Here’s the good part. Change is always possible.

What happens when we try to change a habit that is harming us and we keep slipping back to the same behavior? It's important for everyone to understand that once a habit is engrained in our behavior, any process toward change takes great effort, perseverance and patience. We need to commit to understanding that the journey ahead is about re-establishing our own personal empowerment and control toward positive choices. It isn't easy, but it improves the quality of life.

What are the most common addictive behaviors that you feel teens experience today?



What is worse...having an addictive behavior to driving reckless, or having an addictive behavior to using heroine?



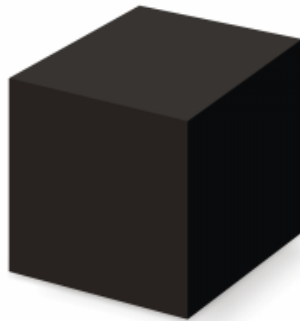
When do you think a person should start thinking about making positive personal changes?



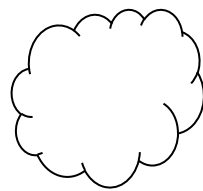
One teen described having an addictive behavior as being trapped inside a box. What do you think he meant?

What do you think are the greatest challenges for teens in terms of "getting outside that box"?

Why is personal empowerment the key to a successful life?



Challenge 9



Grief

Many teens have been exposed to losses on multiple levels. Families are broken due to divorce or death, neighborhoods change, best friends move on. Whatever the experience of loss is, grieving is a part of life that each person goes through in order to heal, both emotionally and physically. There is no easy way to get through grief, but the right kind of support and processing can help us find the path that will help us through our losses.

It is important to acknowledge our feelings when a severe loss occurs, such as the death of a friend or family member. Initially, many people feel completely numb. There is a sense of disbelief. Death feels surreal, as if the moment were happening in another place or another time.

Although some losses feel like they should be less impactful, it really depends on the person and their personal investment. For example, you may look forward to moving to a new city, a different home, or a big school, whereas another teen moving away from where he/she has grown up would feel the changes to be catastrophic. Be replaced.

Our family pets represent another sensitive area for most of us. It can be very traumatic when someone loses an animal that is more of a friend than some human beings. Animals can be just as irreplaceable as people and places that are part of our lives, sometimes more.

Name some of the ways that they can improve the quality of life.

How to deal with grief

Once the reality of our loss sets in, it often becomes difficult to concentrate on school or work or life in general. People go through many stages of grief, including anger, feeling a sense of injustice and a complete sense of helplessness. We often look for someone to blame. Then guilt seems to set in. In most losses, there are words that were left unsaid and actions that people wish that they had taken, and we begin to blame ourselves.

Physically, it is hard to relax when we are grieving. One feels exhausted but is often unable to sleep. People may experience weight loss or gain, have chronic headaches, upset stomachs, accompanied with low energy and fatigue. Every day efforts seem huge and there is a type of escape in just shutting down. Finally, there are often severe mood swings, where we find ourselves feeling normal at one moment enraged in another, and eventually feeling full of despair.

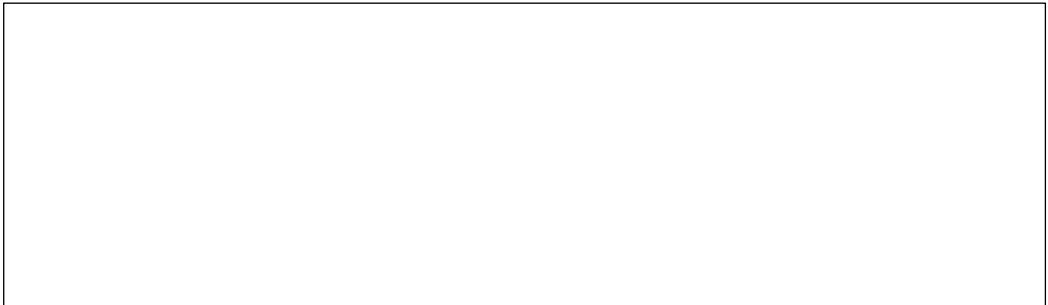
If these feelings don't start "easing up" within a few weeks, a person may be falling into a severe depression. That's why it is important for people to give themselves permission to participate in positive, healthy experiences after the loss has happened. It's important to build some type of healing energy when the moment is available. These opportunities enable us to feel a renewed strength to cope with our sadness and to complete the daily routines and experiences of moving forward.

How can we support someone who is grieving but unable to share the loss?

Why is it hard for people to express their losses?

Using any chemical substances is especially dangerous during the time of grieving. These temporary fixes are only about escape and are always followed with a heavier sadness and deeper depression. Alcohol is a depressant, which means that you might enjoy drinking initially, but your emotional pain will be present the following day, and many times it is worse.

People grieve differently when they face losses. What are some of the ways that you have seen people deal with their grief?



There is never an easy way to get through loss. Teen groups provide a chance to talk about what you're feeling. Shared experiences help the pain. It is also an opportunity to support another person who is going through a difficult time. When teens share an experience that has changed their lives, a community of support will be ready for you.

If you are the person grieving at this time, give yourself permission to be with good friends, go to an event, a movie or a concert. Talk about your loss with someone who respects your feelings. It is important that you find a way to get back into the mainstream of life, and as difficult as it may be, creating a simple positive moment can create the beginning of healing.

Healing doesn't mean that you have forgotten about the importance of the loss, nor does it mean that you don't care as much today as you did yesterday. It means that you are putting your grieving on a shelf in your mind. It is not ever going away and will be there for you to retrieve and remember whenever you choose. However, grieving for your loss does not have to be present every moment of life in order for you to honor your feelings.

There are stages in grieving that are used as a model to describe those feelings that are overwhelming. There is no order in this list. Some people may find themselves trapped in one particular area most of their lives.

ACCEPTANCE

This is time when you process the fact that your world has changed, whether it be because of a person you lost, moving away from friends or family, broken relationships, health issues or other losses. No matter how devastating our experience, we have to move forward.

ANGER

As we try to understand and heal from our losses, we go through various stages of anger. Sometimes, it feels intense and then it may fade, but it is usually present in some capacity throughout our grief.

BARGAINING

This term means that you attempt to find a way to lessen your loss. An example would be to purchase a new puppy to help heal the loss of a family pet. A friend might plant a tree to honor the person. Friends gather together to share positive memories that they want to remember.

DENIAL

This emotion surfaces when our loss feels too great to bear. It works like an anesthetic, calming our emotions as it shuts out the pain of the truth that is too overwhelming. Eventually, the reality will set in.

DEPRESSION

Most emotions surface and retreat depending on the situation, conversation and/or experience. Depression can be alleviated through processing and support but may need to be diagnosed when someone is unable to move forward.

Each person's experiences within the grieving process is unique to them. Just as no two moments in life are the same, no two people will process a death or loss in the same way. Some feel peace or renewed hope after a few weeks, while others may take months or even years before they can let go and move forward as they continue to process their suffering.

Frequently, grief comes in waves, crashing into our minds, nearly suffocating us, and then pulling away as if the memory and the pain were beginning to fade. It can resurface time and again, especially if another kind of loss occurs. One moment of grief can trigger the pain of another.

Sometimes, grief is locked into certain memories that we associate with significant moments or experiences with our loss. Often times, a holiday, a favorite restaurant, a vacation, etc. can trigger those memories that will forever be a part of our past.

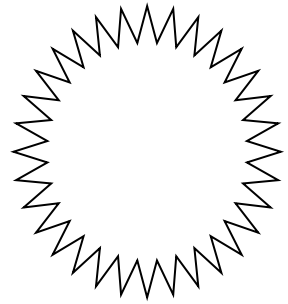
Take time to process

1. Talk about and through your feelings. Find those people who allow you to share without reservation and fear. It could be a sibling, parent, neighbor, spiritual advisor, etc.
2. Write down your feelings in phrases or poetry. Many choose to write a letter to the person, whom they lost, sharing their thoughts.

Keep your thoughts as a celebration of your memories. Use them to build upon as you create moments to allow for healing. Encourage others to add to the collection. It can be its own memorial to a past that brings back times of shared happiness.

3. Create a special moment on behalf of the person. Collect pictures, sayings and thoughts for a memory book, video presentation. Write music, create poetry, and display art in celebration of the positive memories in your past. There are no limits to options for processing your grief.
4. Allow yourself to remember. Recall those memories that were positive. Let go of those times that weren't the best. Give permission to believe that each day is a new beginning.
5. Take care of yourself. Eat well. Get some rest. Exercise. It is about rebuilding the whole person, body, mind, and soul together.

Challenge 10



Personal Power

Developing self-confidence helps us to get through those times that are challenging. If we learn to appreciate who we are as we progress through life, we will become more empowered to succeed. Everyone experiences both success and failure, but what we learn from these moments teaches us to prepare for the next obstacle ahead.

Each one of us can be a leader. Nothing holds us back more than an inability to see our self-worth. So, it is time to face the person in the mirror and begin to believe that you are everything and more than you could hope. That faith in yourself becomes your own personal truth.

Name someone in history whom you think showed positive power. Include the impact that he/she made on others.

Teens are the most influential generation that will make an impact in the world. It's time to prepare for that opportunity right now. It begins with taking charge of each day and making it the best possible.

It's important to not only acknowledge what we do well but to achieve the most that we can, never taking for granted that every person has abilities to offer the world.

Determining what values are most important to us will be the criteria behind making future decisions. Are we committed to truth, loyalty, courage, strength? Do we have a work ethic that is tireless and committed? Are we invested in change or do we just talk about it?

We each have a personal choice to determine the rules that we will live by, and the expectations that we have of others in relationship to our personal values. Knowing that you have the capacity to create positive change is an empowering thought.

What difference are you going to make in the world? How will you make it better?

What will you use to measure your personal success? Will it be a career, fame, fortune, where you live, who are your friends, the positive change that you have made in the world?

Personal Power

You have power over the choices that you make in your life. Begin with accepting responsibility for who you are and what you are choosing to do with every decision that you make. It doesn't matter who your parents are, where you were born, or how you were raised. You have the power to control your own destiny, and no one can take that away from you unless you allow them.

How do I give my power away?

1. If you allow someone else to make you feel uncertain, weak, unstable, unloved, or unwanted, you have given them a piece of your power. No one has the right to control you or decide whether or not you have personal value. It is just a form of manipulation that others use over those who are less confident. Don't let anyone make decisions for you.
2. If you allow something or someone to change your lifestyle, your value system, your friendships and family connections, you have given your power away to that "thing" or person. Each of us needs to guard our personal power because it is the force that gets us through life.
3. If you are obsessed with being with the "right" people, in terms of prestige or popularity as opposed to friendship, integrity and character, then you have given your control over to another person or group that is a temporary relationship.
4. If you are only into "buying, buying, and more buying", then you believe that things will bring you success and happiness and you have chosen to attach your power to how much you have. What you will find is that "things" become boring, carry little value, and are replaceable, unlike great relationships.
5. Priorities should be centered on building community awareness and personal responsibility. We all want to have the basics in life. We also want to have fun and celebrate life. But our greatest strength comes from the focus and appreciation that we extend to others, especially those who are suffering, hungry or in need. Our efforts will bring not only satisfaction but a sense of personal empowerment.
6. Avoid using the word "try." If you walk through life with an "I'll try" attitude instead of "I will do this," you will most likely have LESS of a chance of succeeding. The word "try" is second in terms of power.

What things in life do most people think will make them happy but often times, fail?

You can make it happen.

You have control.

You need to find the way to make it work.

You need to feel your own sense of power.

7. Quit worrying. It doesn't do you any good. It's like replaying the same song over and over and over. You know the words by heart, but the lyrics get old and it starts sounding meaningless. Worrying accomplishes absolutely nothing.
8. Plan. Deal with your problems in a logical way. If it is a problem that you can do something about, do it. Quit waiting. It may mean that you need to apologize to someone. It may mean that you need to get your life together and start working for your goals. It may mean that you have to sacrifice your time and commit to change.
9. Most importantly, if you can't control or fix the situation, then you probably should let it go. Start thinking about those things that you can accomplish. Seek out those people who will welcome you and the life you have chosen. I

***In reality, our power is our own truth.
It is not to be used by others.
It enables us to lead lives that are free.***

Why is it important for each of us to believe that we have personal power in our lives?

How can teens use their power in day-to-day life?

Personal power comes from within. It is how we choose to believe in the promise of each day and the value in each person. It’s time to talk about your own power. What do you see is your greatest strength? How can you share it with others?

Give examples of committed, empowered people in your family, neighborhood or school whom you admire.

What kinds of qualities do empowered leaders need? Explain.

Whom do you know who has overcome great challenges and is an example of personal empowerment every day of his/her life?

Special needs individuals are some of the most heroic people in the world. Tell us about a person you know or have read about. What did this person teach you?

Write this person a letter, telling them how they have inspired you.
