

**TRANSITIONAL  
LIFE SKILLS  
FOR TEENS**

**TEENS~DISCOVERING IDENTITY  
AND MOVING TOWARD  
INDEPENDENCE ▶**

**Facilitator Reproducible  
Activities for Groups  
and Individuals**

**Ester R. A. Leutenberg  
Carol Butler, MS Ed, RN, C**

Illustrated by  
**Amy L. Brodsky, LISW-S**

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**Teens – Discovering Identity and  
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Facilitator Reproducible Activities for Groups and Individuals

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## ***Teens ~ Discovering Identity and Moving Toward Independence***

### **The Purpose**

**Congratulations on taking on the challenges of working with adolescents!**

Most teens try on different identities like Halloween costumes. An image donned may last a day or two, a season, or a lifetime.

**This workbook can help teens work on four basic tasks:**

- Shed a negative trait, by learning *No trait is cast in stone*.
- See self as clay, molded and remodeled by self as the sculptor.
- Create identities that “fit” today, yet are open to alterations.
- View identities as fluid, not fixed.

**Activities in this workbook illuminate the many facets of identity:**

- Personal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Social
- Spiritual
- Independence
- Skills

**Through creative expression and interaction,  
teens are inspired to reach these goals:**

- Bring out the best from within.
- Build new strengths.
- Emulate positive role models.
- Reinforce each other’s individualism.
- Demonstrate age-appropriate autonomy.
- Develop independent living skills.

**May we cherish our teens and uphold this illumination:**

*How beautiful is youth!  
How bright it gleams with its illusions, aspirations and dreams.*  
~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

## Format of the Book

### Introduction for Teen Participants

Present the *Introduction for Teen Participants*, page vii, as an overview before the first activity. This handout is meant to motivate the teens and help them look forward to participating in the activities.

### Cover Page for Each Chapter

Each chapter's cover page may be copied and given to teens before the chapter's sessions. This preview provides an inspirational quotation and descriptions to spark interest in the activities. The cover page helps facilitators accomplish the following:

- Stimulate discussion about the quotation.
- Select topics.
- Prepare the group.

After the first activity in each chapter, teens may want to refer to the cover page and vote on which activity to do next.

Unless otherwise stated, there is no particular order for the handouts in the chapters.

### Behavioral Coping Skills

The back of each cover page lists the behavioral coping skills in each activity.

- Teens can look forward to skills they will work on and ultimately achieve.
- Facilitators may use these as educational goals and competencies to evaluate.

### Chapters

- |                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Personal Identity  | 5. Social Identity           |
| 2. Physical Identity  | 6. Spiritual Identity        |
| 3. Emotional Identity | 7. Identity and Independence |
| 4. Cognitive Identity | 8. Daily Skills Matter       |

### Versatility

- One selected chapter may serve as an entire workshop.
- Sessions may be strategically selected to match the skills teens need to develop or enhance.
- Most handouts are adaptable to individual or group use.
- Creative expression, games, puzzles, skits, and other skill-building experiences are provided.

### Reproducible Handouts

Facilitators may photocopy and distribute pages as they appear in this workbook, or they may white out and/or add text as desired and then photocopy.

### Information on the Back of Each Handout for the Facilitator:

- I. Purpose**  
The goals for the teens in each session.
- II. Skills**  
Behavioral objectives and competencies.
- III. Possible Activities**  
Ways to present topics and responses to elicit.
- IV. Enrichment Activities**  
Additional learning experiences; ways to conclude or follow up.

## Skills Teens will Practice in these Chapters

### Chapter Skills Pages

Each session's skills are listed on the backs of the chapter cover pages. This list allows teens to preview their expected accomplishments, and facilitators to identify teens' goals and competencies.

### Throughout this workbook, teens will be encouraged to engage in the following activities:

Demonstrate oral, written and creative expression skills.

Practice giving and receiving feedback.

#### Chapter 1. Personal Identity

- Identify and celebrate individual differences.
- Personalize the "different drummer" quote.
- State the futility of comparisons and ways to avoid them.

#### Chapter 2. Physical Identity

- Articulate gratitude for bodily function.
- Identify physical factors one can or cannot change.
- View self and others with the mind and heart, not just the eyes.
- Document athletic and non-athletic contributions to a team.

#### Chapter 3. Emotional Identity

- Identify helpful and harmful defense mechanisms.
- Describe ways to feel and deal, rather than numb emotions.
- Demonstrate malleable versus fixed mindsets.
- Create an image for forgiveness and growth.

#### Chapter 4. Cognitive Identity

- Describe thought changes.
- Note ways to enhance brain function.
- Discuss and debate topics of personal interest.
- Articulate ways to cultivate bravery, strength, and intellect.
- Share about life's lessons learned, and the unknowns.

#### Chapter 5. Social Identity

- Identify ways to promote positive, and resist negative peer pressure.
- Compare current to future priorities and change activities as warranted.
- Describe potential positive and negative influences of groups.
- Share ways to overcome loneliness.

#### Chapter 6. Spiritual Identity

- Redirect fear toward positive purposes.
- Compare kite flying facts to self-actualization.
- Create a personal calm in the center of a stormy situation.

#### Chapter 7. Identity and Independence

- Identify signs of codependency and ways to break the cycle.
- Select an altruistic passion and document an action plan.
- Describe how to choose and be a positive role model.
- Individualize concepts about personal choice, motivation, goals, and challenges.
- Share examples of self-direction versus excessive peer influence.
- Practice negotiation and identify prospective mediators in teen-parent/caregiver conflicts.

#### Chapter 8. Daily Skills Matter

- Demonstrate examples of progress toward independence regarding: Money, time, career options, employment, safety in several areas of life, physical and emotional health.

## Ways to Promote Uniqueness and Age-Appropriate Independence

### Sessions

Facilitators can use entire chapters, in the order presented in the book, or choose particular chapters in the order that makes sense for a group's/participant's needs.

If you serve teens with various needs or have time limitations, rather than doing a chapter at a time, consider presenting one handout from each chapter for the first eight sessions; then go back and select another handout from each chapter for subsequent sessions. This method highlights each type of identity and independence and in a condensed time.

Chapters may be presented in any order as a series of workshops.

### Gather Materials Before the Session

Most activities require only handouts and pens.  
A few facilitator pages suggest optional materials.

### Reassure Teens

Participants may volunteer to share or decide not to talk at all.  
Remind teens, "What is said in this room stays in this room."  
Use code names to protect others' privacy. Example: "MBS" for "My buddy Steve."

### Inspire

Encourage teens to stretch slightly beyond their comfort zones when they have the opportunity to lead a team, host a game, act in a skit, express ideas and feelings, and interact with peers.

### Spark Interest

Each session begins with a surprising FACT.  
A volunteers reads the fact aloud. Encourage peer reactions.

### Above all ...

Advocate for teens to find their own identity and move forward to their independence.

#### **Motivate teens to appreciate, save, and be able to look back at their work.**

Before the first session, ask each teen to bring a three-ring binder with a clear plastic cover. Ask teens to bring current photos and/or other paper memorabilia to create a collage.

During the first session, explain that teens will explore their identities and independence. Ask teens to create a title page, affix photos and mementos, and insert the page under the clear cover.

*Sample title: Me at Age \_\_\_\_\_. Who I Am Becoming and Where I Am Going.*

Throughout this workbook, either use three-hole paper or have a three-hole punch handy. Encourage teens to keep their paperwork in the notebook for future reference.

## Introduction for Teen Participants

Teens often wonder “Who am I?”

The answer ...

***Who do you want to be?***

*Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.*

~ George Bernard Shaw

### **You are like a sculptor and your identity is a work in process.**

You are molding yourself into who you want to be.

Your identity need not harden into a granite or solid steel statue.

You can add, carve out, and re-shape your qualities!

### **As you chisel your identity, celebrate YOU!**

Your uniqueness

Your physical being

Your emotions

Your thoughts

Your social life

Your spirituality

Your independence

Your skills

### **As you bring out your best from within, you will ...**

Stand up for your beliefs.

Respect the rights of others.

Do more for yourself.

Pursue your passions.

Make decisions that will impact the rest of your life

And the lives of those around you.

**The upcoming activities will help you create yourself,  
find your own identity and move toward your independence.**



## *Teens ~ Discovering Identity and Moving Toward Independence*

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**Our Deepest Gratitude to**  
*the following professionals who make us look good ...*

- |                                    |                            |
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## What Gets Stuck in Your Head?

**FACT**

**An earworm is a song that gets stuck in your head.**

### What gets stuck in YOUR head?

*If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

Draw a drum.

Then, decorate your drum with messages only you hear about you and your life.



## What Gets Stuck in Your Head?

### FOR THE FACILITATOR

#### I. Purpose

To listen to one's own head and heart.

#### II. Skills

Analyze and personalize the Thoreau quotation: *If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.*

Identify what one likes, dislikes, loves to do, does well, is like inside, hopes to be, etc.

#### III. Possible Activities

- a. Write "Earworm" on the board and ask its meaning (a song that repeats in the mind).
- b. Encourage teens to briefly share tunes and lyrics that get stuck in their heads.
- c. Distribute the *What Gets Stuck in Your Head* handout. A volunteer reads the fact aloud and encourages reactions.
- d. Ask "What does it mean to 'not keep pace' with your companions?" (Not keep up or not fit in).
- e. Pose the question "What reason does Thoreau give for not keeping pace?" (A person hears a different drummer).
- f. Ask "Who is the drummer?" (inner-voice, etc.)
- g. Prompt teens to consider the figurative interpretation of drummer. (Message, calling, uniqueness).
- h. Encourage teens to interpret "*step to the music ... however measured or far away.*" (Follow the heart; forge a new path; cultivate interests and talents; let no one diminish one's dreams; a message may be well-thought out or a still small voice).
- i. Direct teens to draw drums and use words, symbols, drawings, and other representations to show what "different drummer" they hear.
- j. If teens need suggestions, encourage them to brainstorm; a volunteer lists their ideas.

##### **Possibilities**

- What you do well
  - What you love to do
  - What you'd like to do better
  - Who you are inside
  - Who you hope to become
  - Whom/what you are inspired by
  - Your dislikes
  - Your likes
  - Your vision of your adult life
- k. Allow time for completion.
  - l. Encourage teens to share their responses and to receive peer feedback.

#### IV. Enrichment Activities

- a. Tell teens that like musical earworms, put-downs by others or negative self-talk may repeat in their heads, too. A way to get a musical earworm or a negative message out of a person's head is to focus on any puzzle.
- b. Put the following on the board for teens to unscramble.  
"eB uroyesfl; veyrдыboe seel si raelayd ktane." ~ csOar dWlie  
(Answer "*Be yourself; everybody else is already taken.*" ~ Oscar Wilde)