

For Staff: Group Activities for Youth

Using Art to Express Emotion

For this exercise, have paper and colored pencils or markers for drawing.

Read the Story: 10 minutes

As a group, read aloud Andrew Ng's "Empowering Expressions" (p. 8), taking turns. Let teens pass if they don't want to read.

Discussion: 10 minutes

Ask the group what two stories about art Andrew tells. [One, he saw a mural and responded to it by imagining what the artist was feeling. Two, he tells about how he was bullied and channeled his sadness and anger and frustration into a drawing.]

Ask your youth if they've ever had an experience like Andrew's with the mural, where a book, movie, picture, song or anything else pulled them out of their life into someone else's experience. Ask them to describe what the piece of art was and how and why they connected with it.

Activity: 20 minutes

Now, ask teens to make their own art out of something difficult they've been through. It could be a drawing, a poem, a song or rap lyrics, a short story, or a skit.

The only requirement is that it responds to the experience they're thinking of. Andrew responded to teasing by drawing a spider web, so it doesn't have to be literal. The point is to capture the emotion in their creation.

Show and Tell: 10 minutes

Invite anyone who wants to share their piece with the group. Encourage the youth to continue working on their projects at home, or explore using art to process other difficult events that still bother them. Point out that art-making can give people power and control over their lives. By transforming your experience into a creation, you make it yours. ■

Different Strokes for Different Folks

For this exercise, have paper and pens or pencils available for students to jot down some notes.

Read the Story: 10 minutes

As a group, read aloud "School Is My Life Raft" (p. 20), taking turns. Let teens pass if they don't want to read.

Discussion: 30 minutes

Ask the group to identify places in the story where the writer disagrees with most of the people around her or sees

things differently. [She didn't see her mother hitting her as abuse, but as normal Haitian discipline. The other kids tease her for being a good student, but she thinks education is the key to open doors. Rather than finding a hospital depressing, she felt "at home." She likes the idea of working overnight. When her mom tells her that her 98 grade is too low, she doesn't complain like many kids would but agrees.]

Ask the youth to reflect on their own lives and think of one thing that people around them seem to agree on that they see differently.

Give them a few minutes to think and write down their responses.

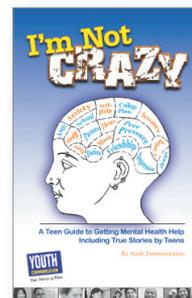
Then ask everyone to explain their differing opinion and why they believe what they do. (Tell the other youth not to interrupt while the person is sharing.)

Next, ask teens to write down anything they've done differently because of that belief (like when the author starts working hard in school even though her friends blow it off). Go around again and share responses. Invite youth to connect that view and the resulting action to their future.

Is seeing something their own way helping them live the life they want?

Finally, ask the group if anyone else's explanation of an unpopular view changed their own opinion. Point out that when you really listen to someone who goes their own way, you too can find a new way of looking at something familiar. ■

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