

Activities for Youth

Fighting Smart

Opening Activity: 5 minutes

Ask everyone to write down one thing they wish were different about their foster care experience. Ask them to keep the ideas specific—for example, “I wish my allowance were broken up so I got it more frequently;” “I wish I had more/fewer meetings with my caseworker;” “I wish I could decide where my visits with my biological parents were held.” Steer them away from big sweeping complaints like “I wish I weren’t in foster care.”

Ask for a few volunteers to share with the group.

Read and Discuss the Story: 15 minutes

As a group, read “Pushing for Healthy Food in My Group Home.” on p. 11.

Ask teens what the writer’s wish was (more fruits and vegetables, less butter and grease and sugar, fewer starches).

Ask, “How did she try to make it happen?” (asked the other girls to support her, politely asked for change, pointed out that agency posters recommended what she wanted—50% vegetables and 25% each carbs and protein—and persisted in her request).

Ask, “What did the other girls do that was not effective?” (yelled at staff, threw out their food).

Explore the Ideas: 15 minutes

Ask participants to look back at their wishes and write two or three sentences in which they make a request for what they want to the person in charge of their foster care agency. Ask them to back up their request with reasons it would be an improvement. (Model the process for the group with one of the examples from the beginning of the session.)

When everyone is finished, ask for volunteers to share their sentences. Discuss as a group what is effective in each person’s “ask,” or how it could be more effective. (If time permits, try role playing a few examples in which a teen makes his or her request to an agency worker in person.)

Closing Activity: 5 minutes

Ask teens to freewrite for a few minutes on this question:

Write about a time when you effectively asked for something you wanted. Why do you think it worked? (If you can’t think of an example, write about a time when you did not ask for something you needed, or did ask but it didn’t go well. How would you do it differently?)

Hiding vs. Sharing

Opening Activity: 5 minutes

Ask the group to brainstorm reasons that you would keep something bad that happened to you a secret. Then ask them to brainstorm reasons you would tell someone about it. Write responses on the board.

Read the Story: 10 minutes

As a group, read “The Point of Trust” on p. 5. First warn the group that the story begins with upsetting sexual violence.

Explore the Ideas: 15 minutes

Point out that the author confided in many different people after her cousin attempted to rape her. Ask teens to identify some negative consequences that resulted from her telling. (her grandmother tortured her; other family members blamed her; her aunt reacted cruelly, which made her mother blame her for telling).

Then, ask teens to find positive consequences that resulted from the author speaking up (her mother got her out of her grandmother’s house; her boyfriend sympathized with her and they got closer, which led to more communication with other people; her Aunt Ella and she also got closer).

Discuss the author’s choices—should she have stayed silent, or was it ultimately the right thing for her to keep confiding in others?

Ask a volunteer to read the last three paragraphs of the story out loud. Revisit the initial list of “reasons to tell” and ask the group if they have anything to add.

Closing Activity: 5 minutes

Ask teens to freewrite for a few minutes on this question:
How do you know whether or not to confide in someone?

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