



For Staff: Activities for Youth

Reconstructing Reality

Opening Activity—Freewrite & Pair Share: 8 minutes

Explain to the group that they're going to do a Freewrite. Remind the group that this is a chance to express their thoughts and feelings without worrying about spelling and grammar.

Read aloud the Freewrite prompt as follows:

"Write about one positive thing you do to manage your stress or express your feelings (for example, listening to music, working out, writing, drawing, etc.). If you can't think of anything that you currently do, write about something you would like to try in the future."

Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils. Give group members three minutes to respond to this prompt. Then ask them to turn to the person next to them and share the parts of their responses they feel comfortable sharing. Give each member of the pair about two minutes to share.

Read the Story: 22 minutes

As a group, read aloud "Easier to Write It" by Trina McCune (p. 8), taking turns. Let teens pass if they don't want to read.

Found Poem: 30 minutes

Pass out copies of Trina's story, "Easier to Write It." Instruct group members that for the next eight minutes they should go through the story again, this time underlining or highlighting short phrases or words that stand out to them. Explain to group members that they'll be using these phrases and words to create their own poem.

Once group members have chosen their phrases and words, they can have the option of physically cutting them out with scissors and gluing them to a new sheet of paper, or they can just re-write them.

Give group members 10 minutes to construct their poems by arranging the words and phrases they have cut out. As they're constructing their poems, walk around the room to offer support and encouragement. Group members' new poems can be about anything they'd like to express.

Use the remaining time to let volunteers read their poems aloud.

Facing the Facade

Opening Activity—Opinion Continuum: 12 minutes

Prior to the activity, create two signs: One that says "Agree" and the other "Disagree." Put the "Agree" sign on one side of the room and the "Disagree" sign on the other side. While the group is still seated, give them the following directions:

- "I will read a statement and then you will decide whether it's true for you (agree) or not (disagree). You will move toward the sign that reflects your opinion. If you're unsure, stand somewhere in the middle."
- "Once everyone has moved, I will invite volunteers to share why they chose to stand where they are."

Next, ask the group to stand up and move to the center of the room. Read the first statement and ask group members to move to a spot that reflects their response to the statement:

- "What I show to people on the outside is not always how I'm feeling on the inside."

Once all group members have moved, ask them to notice where other group members are standing. Ask volunteers to share why they are standing where they are. After the discussion, have everyone return to the middle. Repeat this process for the next three statements:

- "I like to escape reality."
- "It's important to me to be open with others about my experiences."
- "Being vulnerable with others makes you look weak."

Read the Story: 20 minutes

As a group, read aloud "Liar, Liar, Life on Fire," by Bianca (p. 5), taking turns. Let teens pass if they don't want to read.

Removing the Mask: 20 minutes

Pass out colored pencils and the Removing the Mask handout (p. 31) to group members.

Explain to the group:

"Draw a line down the center of the mask. On the left side, draw what you show to the outside world—you can fill your mask with images or words that represent this side of you. On the right side, draw what you keep inside—include images and words that you're comfortable sharing with a partner."

Give group members about 10 minutes to write or draw. Move around the room offering encouragement and support.

After time is up, ask any volunteers to share their mask with the entire group. Invite group members to also share what they noticed about one another's creations. Ask if Bianca's story affected how they labeled their masks.

