

# For Staff: Group Activities for Youth

## Nobody Is Just One Thing

### Read the Story: 10 minutes

As a group, read “Tomgirl” by Selena Garcia on p. 11. Ask for volunteers to take turns reading aloud.

### Art Activity: 30 minutes

Open up the activity by reading aloud this quote from the story: “But can’t I be kind *and* strong? Why do girls have to ‘act like a lady?’ Why are guys who show their feelings called ‘gay’ or ‘feminine’? Neither the male nor the female gender box defines me. I was always in between.”

Tell the group that many of us feel we are in between somehow and we’re never just one thing. Like Selena explains in her story, we’re often told by society how to look or behave as young women or young men. TV, movies, books, magazines, and social media all send messages about how we should be based on our gender. But these messages don’t reflect all, or most, of who we really are.

Pass out drawing paper and colored pencils/markers. Ask group members to draw a line down the middle of their paper. Have them label the left side “Who I’m Expected to Be” and the right side “Who I Choose to Be.”

Then, set out a stack of magazines intended for a female audience (*Essence, Glamour, Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping, Redbook, etc.*), and magazines intended for a male audience (*GQ, Details, Men’s Health, Sports Illustrated, Esquire, etc.*), as well as scissors and glue. (If you don’t have magazines, you can just use drawing paper and markers/colored pencils for this activity.)

Explain to teens that on the left side of their papers, they should cut and paste words and pictures that represent the messages that popular culture sends about gender roles and expectations. On the right side, they should use words and pictures to represent who they really are. For example, on the left side, they might include phrases from magazines like “How to Dress Cute and Get the Guy” or “Get Tough and Get Ripped” while on the right side, they might draw or write about how school is their priority rather than dating or how they’d rather make art than play sports.

Give the group 15-30 minutes to create their collages or drawings. When most of the group has finished, ask for volunteers to share their art pieces, specifically sharing some of the things they choose to be that aren’t represented in popular

culture. As an alternative, you may display the drawings on a large table or central space in the room, and have group members walk around and look at one another’s work.

## What It Means to “Be a Man”

### Read the Story: 10 minutes

As a group, read “No Violence, No Silence” by Anonymous on p. 9. Ask for volunteers to take turns reading aloud.

### Discussion: 15 minutes

Ask teens to look back at the story and put a plus sign by all the parts where Anonymous shows he’s strong and responsible (e.g., breaking up the fight between his mom and dad, calling his sister for support, expressing his emotions to James, seeking help from his principal, etc.).

Then, ask for volunteers to share a part of the story they marked with a plus sign and explain why they thought the teen writer was strong and responsible in the moment they chose. Facilitate a brief discussion by asking the following questions: “What do you think people mean when they say ‘be a man’?” “How is this writer’s idea of being a man different from his father’s?”

### Writing Activity: 15 minutes

Ask group members to write a letter to the teen writer of this story and explain what they connected with in his story, what they think about his ideas of what it means to “be a man,” and any advice that they would give him based on their personal experiences. Tell teens that if they would like, you will mail their letters to the *Represent* office to be shared with the writer. Teens can choose whether or not they would like their letter to be mailed.

Pass out notebook paper and pencils. As the group begins to write, walk around the room offering support and encouragement. If group members get stuck, you can offer examples of what you might write to get them started. Give group members about 10 minutes to write their letters.

If they wish, group members can share their letters with the rest of the group. Letters can be mailed to the *Represent* office at this address:

*Represent* Magazine  
242 W. 38th St., 6th floor  
New York NY 10018