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# Teambuilding with Teens

*Activities for Leadership, Decision Making, & Group Success*



**“MacGregor’s innovative activities and creative games will help teens build the type of essential teamwork skills that today’s universities and the workforce demand.”**

—Monica Shah, Ed.M., Director, Leadership Development, Middle/High School, Girl Scouts of the USA

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**Mariam G. MacGregor, M.S.**



If you are a teacher or any other category of human being who enjoys “putting the ‘Active’ in Activities” as Mariam MacGregor puts it, this book is for you . . .  
beautifully organized, created, and crafted.

—*Gifted Education Communicator*

**A must-have for any teacher or advisor looking for new ways to motivate  
and instill vital leadership lessons.**

—Laura Segura, executive director, National Teen Leadership Program

**Association of Educational Publishers (AEP) Distinguished Achievement Award**

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*Activities for Leadership, Decision Making,  
& Group Success*

**Mariam G. MacGregor, M.S.**



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## DEDICATION

*Dedicated to my husband and children, for modeling  
the importance of leadership and teambuilding  
at home, school, and all places in-between!*

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## INTRODUCTION

# Putting the “Active” in Activities

It’s been shown that people, regardless of age, learn best by being immersed in experiences and by having chances to learn from firsthand circumstances. This principle is at the heart of *Teambuilding with Teens*, a compilation of activities that teach leadership, decision making, communication, and group dynamics. With the diversity of youth programs in many communities and the assorted ways schools address social development and group skills, educators and youth workers often find themselves pulling together activities from various sources. This book gathers, in a single volume, a broad collection of interactive activities that address a range of topics. It provides a complete resource to use in the classroom, in faith- and community-based organizations, at camps, in after-school activities, with athletic teams, or in any other setting where young people can explore character-building concepts.

The activities are ones I wrote or adapted specifically for use in classrooms or advisory groups where group members are working together to build their team. The words “Let’s become a team!” aren’t deliberately voiced. Instead, teens simply learn to enjoy working together and participating in lively learning experiences that make subject matter accessible and meaningful to them and that make sense in *their* here-and-now. Along the way, they develop strong leadership, communication, decision-making, and teamwork skills.

Experiential learning—learning by doing—jumpstarts creative thinking; it places teens into a simulated experience, provides opportunities for them to reflect on it, and encourages them to transfer what they learn to real life. Your class or meeting room will seem boisterous at times, but the noise level and movement can be indicators that teens are physically and mentally involved, embracing new ideas and acquiring new skills. At the same time,

conducting dynamic activities doesn’t minimize the value of written work or in-depth projects. In fact, when students communicate and cooperate with one another, move around, and use their bodies in conjunction with their brains, their spoken and written expressions become more focused, thoughtful, and complete.

## Using This Book in Your Setting

You can use *Teambuilding with Teens* in a wide variety of settings, in or out of school, including classrooms and after-school programs. The book is designed to be flexible. You may choose to conduct all the activities or select particular ones geared to a specific group focus. Depending upon your program goals and upon the participants you work with, you’ll find useful activities for preservice or peer education training retreats. If you’re a youth group leader, you’ll also find activities you can use to help group members gain a better understanding of one another. An added benefit, especially if you’re responsible for school-to-career preparation, is that all the activities emphasize an understanding of working with others—skills that will serve teens well throughout life.

You may want to use the book on its own or incorporate the activities into another curriculum or program. If you are already using a leadership curriculum, the activities in this book can serve as supplemental material. Often, groups latch on to a topic or need additional opportunities to experience and discuss it. Even with the organized delivery of a leadership curriculum, you may find that you need another lesson, want to explore certain topics more deeply or provide more opportunities for teens to develop skills, or have an extra day in the schedule. At these times, *Teambuilding with Teens* can



be a ready support. (If you are using *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens*, the chart on page 178 correlates that curriculum's sessions with activities in this book.)

Some youth programs take place once a month or during another designated time period. If you need occasional or ongoing activities to develop leadership skills over an evening meeting, a day-long workshop, a weekend retreat, or a month-long camp experience, this book provides diverse options to address specific topics. The activities are equally appropriate for students involved in student council, peer mentoring, and detention or probation programs. Finally, the activities are written so that experienced young people can conduct them as well, and after learning some basic facilitation skills (see pages 174–175), teen peer leaders will be confident conducting many of the exercises with other teens and, in some cases, with younger children.

### **Group Size**

The ideal group size for conducting most of these activities depends on participants' ages, maturity, and experiences working with groups. For high school teens, a group of 16–25 typically works well; for middle school teens, a group of 12–18 is optimal. In either case, if the group is too small, the variety of perspectives that make learning more dynamic may not be as diverse; if the group is too large, everyone may not have an opportunity to share individual opinions or try new skills. If you are conducting the activities in a classroom with a larger group, you may want to divide teens into smaller groups that will simultaneously participate in an activity or, if appropriate, rotate teens to be observers. For activities where group size is critical, specific recommendations for adaptations are included.

### **Activity Sequence**

The book begins with “Icebreakers” and ends with “Closure” activities. In between are activities organized into six topic areas: “Self-Awareness,” “Working with Others,” “Communication,” “Qualities of Leadership,” “Social Issues,” and “Decision Making and Problem Solving.” This sequence of topics is arbitrary, and you may use the book's activities in any order you wish.

If *Teambuilding with Teens* is your primary resource guide, you may want to begin with activities that allow teens to warm up as a group, learn values and attitudes that may impact how the group works together, and then move into activities that rely on greater self-disclosure and

address tougher issues or skills for the group to tackle. The topics you cover to accomplish this will depend on your group's particular purpose and needs.

Another approach is to focus on one particular topic before moving on to the next section of the book. In this case, you could work through all of the activities in one section, such as “Communication,” before proceeding to a different section. Here, too, the activities in each section can be organized in any manner you prefer, taking into consideration your group rapport and specific issues facing the group at the time.

Many of the learning concepts overlap from section to section. For example, problem solving is addressed not only in activities under “Decision Making and Problem Solving” but in activities from other sections as well. Several concepts (such as personal values, teamwork, group dynamics, and communication skills) are a focus of various activities throughout the book. With this in mind, refer to the “Overview of Learning Concepts and Activities” chart (pages 176–177) if you wish to further organize activities around specific learning concepts.

## Using the Activities

### **Activity Format**

There is a common format for the activities, each of which is organized as follows:

- **Learning Concepts**—a list of the topics covered in the activity
- **Activity Preview**—a brief explanation of the activity and the estimated time it will take to conduct it, including time for discussion
- **Goals**—the purpose of the activity and what teens will learn or accomplish
- **Materials Needed**—what you'll need to conduct the activity
- **Getting Ready**—steps to prepare for conducting the activity; may include adaptations for group size, physical abilities, age level, or setting
- **Setting the Stage**—some activities include background information for you or the participants
- **Activity**—step-by-step guidance through the planned activity
- **Talk About It**—discussion questions to use with the group following the activity

- **Variation**—some activities include suggestions for further tailoring the activity to your group or for presenting it differently
- **Extending the Learning**—some activities include suggestions for extending or enhancing the lessons taught in the activity
- **Reproducible Forms**—some activities require reference sheets or student handouts, which are provided at the end of the activity. You can also download customizable PDFs at the Free Spirit Publishing website. See page vi for information.

### Getting Ready to Lead an Activity

Prior to conducting an activity, be sure to read through it to familiarize yourself with the goals and focus, check the sequence and timing, and review the background information and discussion questions.

The activities are written and designed with a minimum of required props, so you don't need to find obscure items in order to conduct each lesson. Many activities call for similar materials, and it can be efficient to collect these items in a box so you have a ready-to-use resource that you can keep close at hand and carry with you to any setting. You'll find a list of these standard activity materials ("What You Need to Conduct the Activities") on page 173. Beyond this collection, you will occasionally need additional materials for some activities. All required materials are listed at the beginning of each activity under "Materials Needed." Gather the materials ahead of time, downloading or making photocopies of forms or preparing charts or other props as directed in the "Getting Ready" section of the activity.

The length of time necessary to conduct the activities varies, in most cases ranging from approximately 20–45 minutes. This time frame allows you to incorporate the activities into your classroom period or group meeting schedule in a manner that best fits your objectives. It is important to always build in time for discussion so teens have the opportunity to understand how the activity applies to their daily lives. A few activities are best conducted over 45–60 minutes, and in some cases you may want to use more than one meeting time. These recommendations are stated at the beginning of the activity.

When background information is included ("Setting the Stage"), review this material. It will give you context for the activity or for skills and lessons teens will be learning. Make a note of any part of the information you wish to share with students.

Nearly all activities include a closing discussion

("Talk About It"). After you've conducted an activity once or twice, jot down any additional questions that you find useful for discussions or that relate specifically to the setting or teens you're working with. If you prefer, select one or two of the activity's discussion questions and assign these for written reflection.

## Setting the Tone

It's essential to promote a safe environment that encourages supportive attitudes for and from everyone. Also, because the activities are interactive and often require moving with and around one another, you'll need to express your expectations about how to keep learning productive. Some teens are uncomfortable being physically close to peers, while others are at ease with lots of interaction. Remind teens that even though they are moving around the room for many of the activities, it's important that they stay on task within appropriate space boundaries inside the room and in relation to one another.

### Understanding Groups

Years ago, Bruce W. Tuckman, Ph.D., a psychology professor at Ohio State University, researched and wrote about the developmental sequence of how small groups work together. His research findings have become benchmarks of the progression of group dynamics, and it's likely you'll see the sequence he identified in the groups of teens you work with, especially if your group is meeting or working together over time.<sup>1</sup>

Tuckman identified four stages of group dynamics—forming, storming, norming, and performing. He later added a fifth stage, adjourning, to describe when a group has no additional purpose for being together. Briefly, the first four stages are explained like this:

1. **Forming:** The group is just getting acquainted and will rely on the leader (facilitator) to guide them and determine group goals. Other than getting to know one another and finding out what people have in common, the group doesn't have a shared goal or purpose. An example is when a group of teens first enters your classroom or program, unaware of who the other members are or what their purpose is in being together.

<sup>1</sup> A more in-depth explanation and application of Dr. Bruce Tuckman's stages of group development can be found in the original article "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63 (1965), 384–399, reprinted in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal* 3 (Spring 2001). The article is available as a Word document at [www.dennislearningcenter.osu.edu](http://www.dennislearningcenter.osu.edu) under "Research."

## 4 *Teambuilding with Teens*

- 2. Storming:** The group has met before and now spends time trying to figure out how each person fits into the group. The atmosphere isn't nearly as friendly and inclusive as in the forming stage as people try to firm up roles, goals, and relationships within the group. Continuing the example from the first stage, during the storming stage some cliques may form as people begin to connect with those who share similar values or attitudes. The leader may still be heavily involved in providing guidance.
- 3. Norming:** The group has met more often and established common goals and expectations of one another and the group. The group is able to make big decisions together and productively work through challenges. The atmosphere has become more sincere, sociable, and connected. The leader is more a consultant than the driving force. Following through with the example, the group has now participated in some activities or projects together, and teens are generally willing to share their opinions openly to help the group improve when working together.
- 4. Performing:** The group has become a well-functioning team that shares a vision and goals. If disagreements arise, the team works cooperatively to resolve them. Although the team still expects the leader to tell them what needs to be accomplished or to point out tasks they may overlook, they don't need specific instructions. Now, focused on a mission such as a service project, they work together to make sure they achieve their individual and team goals within the group.

It's not unusual for adolescent groups to bounce back and forth among the first three stages before solidly reaching the performing stage. These fluctuations are affected by such things as a group being brand new or participants coming and going due to their schedules. The nature of adolescent relationships also affects a teen group's facility in moving beyond personal friendships or cliques on their way to creating inclusive, well-functioning teams. Therefore, if your group doesn't have an established mutual goal or vision (such as an after-school intervention program where students share an understood purpose), you'll want to create an atmosphere where teens identify common reasons for being there. The more personal these reasons, and the more readily group peers can relate to them, the greater will be your success in getting the group to work together on communication, leadership, and decision-making activities requiring more intense interaction.

With the four stages in mind, you'll begin to see familiar patterns in how teen groups work together as you conduct the activities in *Teambuilding with Teens*. To manage the earliest stage, conduct icebreakers, get-to-know-you exercises, and activities where you, the facilitator, guide the steps. As a group moves through the second and third stages, you can introduce more challenging topics and tasks. By the time groups reach the performing stage, you'll find they tend to successfully interact and cooperate with one another more readily. As a group nears the end of its overall time together, you'll want to conduct closure activities that are meaningful to individual participants as well as to the group as a whole.

### **Establishing Group Guidelines**

From your group's onset, it is important to let participants know what to expect from you and from each other. You, your school, or your organization may have a general set of group guidelines in place. If you do, make these clear to the group at the beginning of your time together and make certain everyone understands and agrees to them. If there are no established guidelines, consider guiding the group to set their own with ideas like these:

- Members of the group listen to each other and treat one another with respect.
- Everyone is encouraged to share ideas although no one is required to do so.
- Everyone in the group should feel accepted and valued.
- All points of view are welcome.

The activity "Norms, Roles, and Expectations" (pages 40–44) focuses specifically on developing group guidelines and could be used in an early meeting with your group to set the tone.

### **Confidentiality**

With your particular setting in mind, you may need to take into consideration confidentiality issues that arise during the discussion process of the activities. Where confidentiality is involved, remind teens of the importance of maintaining a group atmosphere that's respectful of diverse opinions. Instruct group members to honor everyone's confidentiality. Caution them not to mention other people's personal information or to use

real names when recounting interactions or conflicts, both within or outside the group.

When conducting the activities, you may discover that some topics evoke personal admissions and highly charged situations. It's hard to predict exactly when someone may become emotionally affected or when conflict may arise within a group. But if you establish trust early on and monitor any particular dynamics among members, you likely will be able to anticipate potentially difficult circumstances. If intense moments occur, consider the stage the group is in, remind teens about maintaining confidentiality, and help those in disagreement to talk it through.

On rare occasions while discussing personal topics or challenging social issues, a teen may reveal private information. If a disclosure is troubling to you, talk with another adult decision maker or with your supervisor or principal. If a teen reveals that she or he is living in an abusive situation, you are obligated to report what you've heard. Follow the guidelines of your school or organization, or check with your principal or agency head about how to proceed.

### Dealing with Difficult Discussions

Difficult discussions can arise for a variety of reasons: a topic may bring up anxiety for certain individuals, an activity may move some teens out of their comfort zone, or interactions between teens may become heated due to differences of opinions. It's wise to be prepared to help teens learn to navigate such situations.

If you suspect that a particular topic or activity may lead to difficult conversations or controversy, you can take preemptive steps to maintain a positive, productive learning environment. One step is to acknowledge at the start that the activity may challenge or upset some people and that the goal is to stay open-minded in order to learn as much as they can from it. Another is to set or remind teens of agreed-upon ground rules for the group, with an emphasis on tolerance and understanding different points of view.

Should you unexpectedly find teens in heated debate with each other, try to diffuse the situation by encouraging all parties to air opinions without judging or attempting to persuade those who don't share their perspective. Regardless of the subject matter that has sparked strong emotions, take time to draw on examples or situations that help the individuals connect personally to the existence of diverse viewpoints. If necessary, encourage teens to take a step back, think about how and why the activity is affecting them so dramatically, and spend some time

talking about this. Point out the value of being able to express how one feels alongside the value of not having views or opinions forced on someone by others; remind participants that these are important experiences for everyone in the group.

### Skills Practice

Many of the activities depend upon one or more of the teens taking a leadership role or guiding the group process. Ask different volunteers to assume these roles for each activity, so everyone gets a chance to practice leadership and decision-making skills along with contributing to the group's development and success. (For purposes of this book, *leadership skills* broadly covers communication, ethical action, teamwork, tolerance, understanding values, problem solving, and several other dynamics. These skills are identified in the "Learning Concepts" highlighted at the beginning of each activity and in the "Overview of Learning Concepts and Activities" chart on pages 176–177.) At times, you may want to randomly pick participants' names out of a box or hat. Encourage reluctant teens to give it a try, and promote the activity as an opportunity rather than a requirement.

As the facilitator, you can help teens practice skills comfortably by providing participants plenty of opportunities to try new skills, looking for what's "right" in what teens are doing, and giving helpful, positive feedback. For teens who will call on their own experience as a participant when they are in the position of a facilitator, your feedback provides useful guidance in how to successfully conduct the activity themselves.

Some activities use role playing as the teaching technique. Role playing provides participants a fun opportunity to experience different perspectives in small or large groups. Teens assume the roles of certain characters and act out various scenarios. Although much of the role playing in the activity is scripted to support an expected outcome, you still need to address some basic ground rules for role playing. Remind participants that they don't have to reveal personal information in role playing, and encourage them to avoid acting overly silly or without focus. If this occurs, stop the role playing and remind students of its purpose. Role playing is most meaningful when participants and observers take time afterwards to discuss their reactions to the role play and its application to the everyday world.

As teens practice different leadership and group roles, their learning takes on a real-life aspect. This makes it easier to apply the lessons learned and identify strategies when actual situations arise in their daily

activities. The activities are designed to be engaging and appealing, but there may still be some teens who participate minimally. By promoting and encouraging their role within the group and highlighting how what they learn applies in their personal lives, you can help them become more interested in improving their overall leadership and decision-making skills.

### **Encouraging Writing, Reflection, and Action**

You may want to identify a method for teens to keep track of what they learn. This can be accomplished by having them keep a personal notebook or journal where they can write down thoughts after the activity. This also offers a place for participants to keep any handouts or other work they completed. Although each activity prompts you to do some sort of wrap-up, you may wish to carry this further. For example, you may want to have teens work toward creating a mural or service project together that connects what they learn through the activities. In this case, allow time for teens to work on the identified group project during the wrap-up time and then encourage writing in their journals between group meetings.

## **The Group That Works Together Succeeds Together**

Every group of teens is different. The sports team that meets five times a week and plays a game on Saturdays varies in obvious ways from the youth group that meets

once a month. But these differences don't prevent individuals from learning the skills that make them successful members of their group. By participating and learning from others in a group setting, teens are able to transfer their leadership, decision-making, and getting-along skills into real situations now and in the future. When teens are prepared to be strong group members—to actively fulfill their roles and responsibilities as part of a team—they are on their way to success as students, friends, employees, volunteers, and community leaders. Your guidance in this preparation is crucial, and there's no reason that a learning process with such a significant impact can't be lively and engaging for everyone involved.

Whether you're a seasoned teacher or group facilitator or you're new to working with a class or youth group, these activities were created with you in mind. Use them as they're written or add your own spin as you find what works best in your setting. Either way, enjoy inspiring teens with the long-lasting confidence and personal growth that comes from being part of a successful group.

Please contact me if you have any questions or experiences to share. You can reach me at:

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# Icebreakers



Martian Names

Change the World

Handprints

# Martian Names

## LEARNING CONCEPTS

- Group warm-up
- Getting to know others

( 25-35 MINUTES )

This is a relatively low-risk icebreaker to get members of the group to introduce themselves in a creative manner. Teens write their names backward (in “Martian language”) and then explain to the group what they mean. This light approach helps participants feel comfortable

sharing a little about themselves. The activity is effective with groups of all ages, easy and fun to conduct at the first meeting, and useful in establishing a positive and warm group atmosphere.

### GOALS

Participants will:

- introduce themselves to one another
- learn names of others in the group
- share something about themselves

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Markers
- 8½" x 11" colored paper

### GETTING READY

To assist with explaining the activity, it’s helpful if you have created your own “Martian name” sheet ahead of time and have determined what your name means in Martian language.

## Activity

Pass out a piece of paper and marker to each participant. Create and tell a story to set up the activity, such as this:

**Imagine you have just landed on Mars and need to introduce yourself to your Martian tour guide. Language on Mars is the complete reverse of ours. This means you must change your name so it’s backward:**

last name first, first name last, and both spelled backward, letter by letter. In addition, every name on Mars means something special and relates to the person who has that name. For example, my Martian name is \_\_\_\_\_, which means \_\_\_\_\_.

(Hold up the name sheet that you prepared prior to conducting the activity.) **On your sheet of paper, write your name as it would appear on Mars. Practice pronouncing it. Think about what your Martian name means and be prepared to share it with everyone in the group.**

While participants are deciding what their names mean, encourage them to consider things that are important to them—special quotes, something they are good at, unique personal characteristics, cultural values, or other interests. This can assist them in creatively sharing information about themselves without necessarily risking too much in an early-forming group. Here are some examples:

- Sarah Jones becomes “Senoj Haras,” which means “enjoys taking long trips and hiking with my friends.”
- Javier Martinez becomes “Zenitram Reivaj,” which means “a very loyal friend and a good son.”

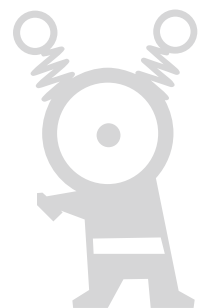
## Talk About It

When all students have finished writing their names, go around the group and, one at a time, have participants hold up their name sign, introduce themselves, and explain what their name means. In addition, have teens introduce their actual (Earth) names and say one or two other things about themselves if they wish. You may also choose to ask each participant to respond to questions such as these:

- **Why are you participating in this (class, camp, club, workshop, group)?**
- **What do you hope to gain from participating?**
- **What are you hoping to contribute to the group?**
- **What is one of your favorite topics for discussion?**

## Wrapping Up

At the end of the activity, and if space allows, hang the sheets up on a bulletin board or wall and leave them there for a few meetings to keep the group atmosphere friendly and warm. Otherwise, allow teens to take the name sheets home.





# Change the World

## LEARNING CONCEPTS

- Getting to know others
- Vision and values
- Critical thinking and social change

( 45 MINUTES )

For this activity, teens respond to a question prompt to create posters that express, visually and verbally, what the world would look like if they could change it. It is a simple yet powerful way to get teens talking about their community, the world around them, and their roles

within a social system. This is a good group-introduction activity; it is also useful when teens are preparing to be involved in community service or advocacy efforts.

### GOALS

Participants will:

- introduce themselves to the group
- gain awareness of topics or issues that are important to others in the group
- establish an understanding of what is valued by peers in the group

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- 9" x 12" or 12" x 18" construction or drawing paper

### GETTING READY

Place the paper, markers, pencils, and crayons in an area easily accessible to everyone in the group as they work on their posters.

## Activity

Have teens select a piece of paper and several markers, pencils, or crayons. Then ask them to find a comfortable spot where they can think and draw on the paper. Explain the activity by saying:

**On your sheet of paper, you'll create a poster by drawing a picture or an image, or by writing a quote or statement, in response to this question:**

- **If you could change the world, what would it look like?**

**Your poster does not have to be particularly artistic. Simply think about what changes you would want in the world if you had the power to make them happen. Maybe you'd like to see a cure for a certain disease or the end of certain social troubles; your changes might affect millions or they might make a smaller impact. Create your poster with that in mind. You have 10 minutes.**

Depending on the level of abstract or critical thinking skills of your group, you may need to help participants get started. Walk around the room to guide teens in their efforts and, if necessary, ask brief questions to help focus and clarify what they want to change. Encourage students to use metaphors, quotes, poetry, symbols, drawings, colors, and other methods to express their perspectives.

Once everyone has completed a poster, bring the group back together and have each person share his or her work with the entire group. Provide an opportunity for teens to ask one another questions; encourage them to do so. You may want to ask your own brief questions to further assist participants in expressing what they've drawn on their paper. Depending on the size of your group, this sharing can take 20–30 minutes. If you are using this as an introduction exercise, provide enough time for individual students to present plenty of explanation or background about their posters.

### VARIATIONS

If the activity is used after teens have established rapport, you may choose to revise or expand the question

prompt to address specific topics your group is working on or discussing. For example, if the group is preparing to undertake a service project, you could phrase the question like this: "By the time your group finishes your service project, what impact do you hope to leave on the people you're serving? What kind of difference do you want to make for them?" Or for more global topics, you might phrase it: "If you were able to make a difference in the lives of people living in war or poverty, what would that difference look like? You can also show what it would look like if world leaders worked to make a long-lasting difference."

If you're conducting this activity as part of a career-preparation program, you could use a prompt like this: "Think about your dream job. What does it look like? What would you be doing? As you work toward your career, what do you need to do to be prepared for your dream job? What changes do you need to make in your life to get ready?"

## Talk About It

Use 5–10 minutes to have teens talk about their thoughts during the activity. Ask these discussion questions related to your group's experience:

- **What was it like to be asked this question? What were the first images or ideas that came to mind?**
- **How do you feel you can influence the future, both as an individual and as part of a group?**
- **What role do you think people have in creating the future you envision on your poster?**
- **What do you think you would hear if you asked this same question of others who are older or younger than you?**

## Wrapping Up

At the end of the activity, and if space allows, hang the posters around the room or in a more visible hallway so others can look at, read, and think about them. If space doesn't allow this, let teens take their posters home.

# Handprints

## LEARNING CONCEPTS

- Recognizing role models
- Group warm-up or closure
- Getting to know others
- Personal values

( 20-25 MINUTES )

This activity encourages participants to think about people who have touched their lives in positive and influential ways. Teens trace their handprints, write (in the fingers) names of role models who demonstrate certain qualities or behaviors, and share what they wrote with the group. Used as an icebreaker, the activity allows oth-

ers a peek into the people individuals value in their lives and sets a tone for achieving certain leadership or character goals. A variation provides qualities and questions to consider if using the exercise for group closure.

### GOALS

Participants will:

- identify how people positively influence their lives
- share insight into who and what they value
- set a warm tone for a new group or allow for appreciations during group closure

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Newsprint
- Masking tape
- Construction paper
- Markers or crayons
- *Optional*—Scissors, hole punch, yarn or twine

### GETTING READY

Draw a large hand on a piece of newsprint, filling the sheet. Number the fingers 1–5, with the thumb being number 1 and the pinky finger 5. Within the fingers, write these five statements:

1. The person you most admire
2. Someone in life you think you can learn a lot from
3. Someone you know who has great leadership potential
4. The person in this group you are most looking forward to getting to know
5. The leadership trait or personality characteristic you most want people to use to describe you

Hang the newsprint hand in a visible location for teens to refer to when doing their handprints. Place the construction paper and markers or crayons in an area easily accessible to all.

### VARIATION

If using this activity for closure, write these statements in the fingers:

1. The person in this group you most admire
2. Someone in this group who has made the greatest impact on you
3. A person in this group you hope to work with again
4. A person in this group you enjoyed getting to know or think you could still learn a lot from
5. The leadership trait or personality characteristic you most want people to use to describe you

## Activity

Invite teens to select a piece of paper and a marker or crayon and write their name at the top of their paper. Ask them to place one hand on the paper and trace the outline of that hand, spacing their fingers apart so that each one is clearly separated from the others.

Starting with the thumb, have participants label the fingers with the numbers 1–5 in exactly the same configuration shown on the sample poster. (This is for consistency as they share what they've written in each finger.) Explain the reason a handprint is used for this activity by saying:

**In your life, there are people who have touched you in meaningful ways. Although you aren't always aware of their touch when it happens, you recognize it when given a chance to think about it. Just as your handprints remain on the things you touch, so do other people's imprints remain with you.**

In the individual fingers of their handprint, ask teens to write responses to the statements on the newsprint. Allow 5–10 minutes for people to do this. Once everyone has completed filling in the hands, bring the group together to share and discuss the handprints.

## Talk About It

Use 10–15 minutes to have the group discuss the people and ideas evoked in the handprints. Depending on the rapport of the group, you may ask them to mention a few or all of the people they wrote down and briefly explain why they included particular individuals. During discussion time, encourage teens to ask their own questions about what people have written. In addition, discuss questions such as these:

- **When people impact your life in a positive way, how do you let them know it?**
- **What similarities are there among the people who've impacted your lives?**
- **How would you like others to think of your impact on *their* lives?**
- **What makes a person's impact most memorable?**

### VARIATION

If using the activity for closure, you may want to ask:

- **If we hadn't done this activity, how would you have expressed your appreciation to people in this group who impacted you?**
- **Even though the group won't be meeting together any longer, how can you continue to positively influence each other?**
- **What steps will you take to make a positive impact on the lives of others beyond this group?**

## Wrapping Up

If time allows, have teens cut out their hand tracings. Punch a hole in both the thumb and pinkie finger of each hand. Cut a piece of yarn or twine that's long enough to weave through the holes of all the hands to create a garland of handprints to display. Have teens work together to weave their hands onto the string and hang the completed garland along a wall or across the room. If space or time doesn't allow for this, encourage teens to put the handprints in their journals or notebooks for future reference.