

**TRANSITIONAL  
LIFE SKILLS  
FOR TEENS**

**TEENS ~  
IT'S TIME TO  
GROW UP ▶**

**Facilitator Reproducible  
Activities for Groups  
and Individuals**

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**Teens – It’s Time to Grow Up**

Facilitator Reproducible Activities for Groups and Individuals

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## Purpose of the Book

Adolescents, like most people, crave adult privileges yet cling to childish comforts. Teens who tire of adult advice listen to peers and messages from icons of popular culture. Some teens submit blindly to authority; some respect it; others rebel. Ideally teens will be receptive to wisdom but not controlled by commands; able to discern positive from negative peer pressure and media messages; and capable of monitoring and motivating themselves.

***Teens ~ It's Time to Grow Up*** helps teens learn, develop, mature and self-actualize with games, mock videos (skits or role plays for which teens prepare a possible video presentation), interviews, team activities, drawing, journaling, debates, discussion and other modes.

These activities guide teens in many directions:

- Grow in maturity.
- Learn from personal and others' experiences.
- Compare immature and mature ideas and actions.
- Adopt positive and assertive thoughts and behaviors.
- Apply quotations, lyrics and poems to real life.
- Make analogies between G.P.S. (global positioning devices) and individual self-righting capabilities.
- Define life lessons from favorite activities like sports and driving.
- Understand the effects of parental styles; self-parent as needed.
- Differentiate between love and infatuation, crushes and committed partnerships.
- Identify superhero and real role model traits to emulate.
- Serve as a positive influence on others.
- Determine the significance of values versus valuables.
- Acquire or enhance virtues.
- Become self-directed and determined to meet goals.
- State strengths derived from adversity (protective factors vs. risk factors).
- Recognize self as a potential late bloomer and flourish.
- Develop future dreams and ways to pursue passions.

### Why this approach?

Teens may tune out adult efforts to teach and preach.

Teens tune into activities, peer involvements, opinion formations and free expressions because...

Teens take the lead.

### Process trumps content as teens engage in the following:

- Introspect and interact
- Help self and others
- Brainstorm
- Problem-solve
- Confide
- Collaborate
- Uncover inborn gifts
- Fulfill potential

**Aren't these the essence of adulthood?**

## Format of the Book

**An Introduction for Participants** to motivate teens for the activities (Page vi).

**Seven chapters**, four to nine sessions per chapter, encompass the following:

**1. RE-gress or PRO-gress?**

Security blankets, stages, delayed gratification, to crawl or walk, whine or affirm, are pondered.

**2. Life Skills**

Sandboxes, bikes, sports, pets, the senses, railroads, road rules and driving directions provide lessons.

**3. Parents, Partners and Role Models**

Parent profiles, idols and ideals, relationships and red flags, leaders and followers are featured.

**4. Home, School and Work**

Family roles, behavior behind closed doors, students, teachers, yearbook analogies, challenges and work habits are addressed.

**5. Tangible and Intangible**

Materialism, money, monetary and behavioral costs versus benefits, values and ethics are explored.

**6. The Journey to Maturity**

Growth through fertilizer, late bloomers, rites of passage, frozen then freed, gladiator mentality, measures of maturity, perspectives, continuums and sex sense receive focus.

**7. Life after High School**

Education and training, career calls, love and partner traits.

**Each chapter may serve as a workshop; provide one session per day for a series of days. Posters or flyers might promote the theme in advance; emphasize the interactive and collaborative nature of the sessions.**

**Facilitator's Table of Contents and Summary** for each chapter provides a related quotation and brief session descriptions.

**A reproducible handout for the participants** for each session; most adapt to individual or group activities. Read each handout before session, photocopy and white out or add text for a specific population's needs; then reproduce the page and distribute. Some sessions use one handout per teen; others need to be cut on broken lines, etc.

**For the Facilitator** on the back of each handout tells how to use the page. It includes:

- I. Purpose: goals for teens
- II. General Comments: brief background information
- III. Possible Activities: ideas to introduce the topic, interactive and/or individual activities
- IV. Enrichment Activities: additional learning opportunities

**Most sessions** provide more than enough material for a **fifty-minute session**; if more time is needed facilitators may assign homework or continue topics at the next meeting.

**Delicate subjects** are addressed, particularly in Sex Sense; **facilitator discretion is advised.**

**Facilitators are reminded to refer troubled teens for a psychiatric evaluation** if they appear severely depressed, admit to thoughts about harm to self and/or others, have been or are being abused, or based on your intuition, indicate they need more help. Follow all legal reporting requirements. If threats are imminent, call 911 or your local emergency services number.

**Teens need to know that keeping secrets can kill.** If aware that a peer wants to harm self or others, teens need to tell a trusted adult. To break a confidence to save a life is honorable and mature.

## Ideas to Facilitate Groups and Growth

### Consider the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Participants treated like children will act like children.

Participants talked down to or talked at will turn off.

Participants will live up to expectations to think intelligently, behave unselfishly and maximize potentials.

***Teens ~ It's Time to Grow Up warrants mature methods to educate and empower.***

### When possible ...

- Ask don't tell.
- Listen to teens.
- Encourage a forum format; one person at a time speaks; teens respect divergent views.
- Promote fun through adult-type games.
- Elicit expression through role plays, pantomimes, verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Provide leadership opportunities (teens play game show host or write on the board, etc.).
- Emphasize teamwork.
- Expect movement within activities; do not expect teens to sit like statues in a lecture hall.
- Set up chairs in a circle for most sessions, but prepare to rearrange seats (for peers to collaborate, for teams to face each other, for watching skits or debates).
- Support preferences to disclose information or maintain privacy.

**Remind teens to use code names for confidentiality. Example: If friend Sue loves to swim, use *SLS* for *She loves swimming*; only the writer knows the true identity.**

**This English 18th century proverb applies to today's teens: *Give credit where credit is due.***

Recognize, reinforce, and reward adolescent efforts to grow up.

Teens, like most people, are works in progress.



## Deepest Gratitude

***Our gratitude to these teen counselors for their input ...***

Annette Damien, MS, PPS

Beth Jennings, CTEC Counselor

***And to these professionals who make us look good!***

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## Introduction for Teen Participants

*Standing on the fringes of life offers a unique perspective.  
But there comes a time to see what it looks like from the dance floor.*

~ Stephen Chbosky

From *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, a novel about growing up.

Do you feel like you're on the fringes?

Do you believe you're on the brink of something big?

Do you seem torn between childish comforts and grown-up challenges?

Do you want the freedom and privileges of adulthood?

The activities in ***Teens ~ It's Time to Grow Up*** help you take healthy risks, to enter life's arena. You'll have the chance to play adult-type games, perform in and/or watch mock videos, work with teammates, brainstorm, draw, journal, discuss, debate, stand up for your beliefs, share your thoughts and maintain privacy.

A few ground rules for groups and growth:

- Be honest with yourself when journaling.
- If something is inappropriate to share with others, talk with a counselor or trusted adult.
- Respect your beliefs but consider others' rights to express their views.
- One person at a time talks; do not interrupt.
- These groups are a safe place and what is revealed should not be repeated.
- Write and draw for you, yourself, not for class or publication; you decide who sees your work.
- Be a healthy risk-taker: narrate, act in a role play or pantomime; be silly in charades.
- Volunteer to be a leader, play game show host, be a scorekeeper or write peers' ideas on the board.
- If you prefer to think, watch and listen, feel free to be yourself; there's no pressure to participate.
- Ask for help from your facilitator or a trusted adult if you feel depressed or overwhelmed or need someone to listen.

**When you write or share, use code names to protect confidentiality. Example: If your friend Sue loves to swim, use *SLS* for *She loves swimming*; only you know the true identity.**

**If you want to harm yourself or others or if a peer reveals suicidal or violent feelings, tell a trusted adult, call 911 or your local emergency services number or go to your nearest hospital emergency room. SECRETS KILL.**

**To break a confidence to save a life is honorable and mature.**

# Teens ~ *It's Time to Grow Up*

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# RE-GRESS **1** OR PRO-GRESS

*The great thing in the world is not so much  
where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.*

– OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

## **You Can't Go Back** ..... page 11 ►

*Teens recognize possible regressive tendencies and adopt more mature ways to meet needs. Teens differentiate between security blankets and true well-being; between emotional pacifiers and real sustenance.*

## **Whom Do You Trust?** ..... page 13 ►

*Through a simulated talk show or newspaper interview, teens address past and present trust issues, trustworthiness, and faith in self. Additionally, teens may portray trust via posters, mock videos and commercials, slogans, songs and poems.*

## **INSTANT GRATIFICATION** ..... page 15 ►

*Teens are encouraged to value future rewards and character development over quick fixes. Realistic situations address impulsivity, aggression, peer pressure, quick money, unethical gains, etc. Teens consider diligence, self-respect, compassion and other attributes.*

## *Then and Now* ..... page 17 ►

*With a Jeopardy-type game, teens apply some of Erikson's stages of development to their past, present and future. Teens give real life examples related to autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, and other concepts.*

## **Crawl or Walk Tall?** ..... page 19 ►

*Using game format, teens consider whether they crawl or walk tall through life. Passive responses to situations are provided; teens verbalize assertive alternatives. Teens are encouraged to take healthy risks and be authentic. In a team game, teens handle break-ups, loneliness, setbacks and other challenges.*

## **Whine or Affirm?** ..... page 21 ►

*In a team game, teens change hopeless, helpless self-talk to empowering adult assertions. Teens see a choice: to blame the past, feel doomed, remain a victim, compare self with others, etc.; or to take inventory about self, rise above adversity, celebrate uniqueness, advocate for self, learn to cope and take other positive actions.*



# You Can't Go Back



**1. During infancy, all of your needs were probably met. How do you now try to return to an easier way?**

Example: *Expect parents or care-providers to clean my room, cook, pay for my car and gas.*

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**2. What is your current ineffective security blanket?**

Example: *Wearing the latest trends; alcohol and drugs.*

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**3. What is your current real source of security?**

Example: *A sense of self-worth, competence and purpose.*

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**4. What is your current emotional pacifier?**

Example: *A person; unreal because no one person can provide everything; eating to forget troubles.*

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**5. What is your true emotional nourishment?**

Example: *Positive self-talk.*

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# You Can't Go Back

## FOR THE FACILITATOR

### I. Purpose

To recognize possible regressive tendencies and consider more effective ways to meet needs.

### II. General Comments

Teens want to grow up yet seek some comforts of infancy.

### III. Possible Activities

- a. If possible, show a picture of a baby thumb-sucking or ask a volunteer to draw one.
- b. Ask why some babies suck their thumbs; (to self-sooth).
- c. Ask teens in what ways they seek comfort.
- d. Distribute the *You Can't Go Back* handout and allow time for completion.
- e. Encourage teens to share their responses.

### IV. Enrichment Activities

Encourage teens to elaborate on their responses and/or to discuss concepts below.

1. Examples of return to an easier way:
  - Whine to get what you want instead of asking politely or working to afford what you want.
  - Expect others to do your homework or projects for you.
  - Expect constant compliments, success in every endeavor, unconditional acceptance.
2. Examples of current ineffective security blankets:
  - Food.
  - Popularity at all costs.
  - Attractiveness, latest fashion clothing and shoes, cars.
  - Superficial friends.
  - Excessive social networking.
3. Examples of current real sources of security:
  - Feelings of self-worth, competence, purpose.
  - Supportive family, true friends.
  - Coping skills to deal with stress and disappointment.
4. Examples of current emotional pacifiers:
  - Electronics, social networks, designer clothes, status symbols, etc., unreal because they are external and temporary.
  - Attention or acceptance for going along with the crowd (acting against your beliefs).
5. Examples of true emotional nourishment:
  - Faith; spiritual strengths.
  - Appreciation of nature, art, music, literature.
  - Participation in nature, (gardening, etc.); creative endeavors.
  - Satisfaction in being your best self.
  - To work for a cause greater than you – charitable deeds, social, political, environmental activism.



# Whom Do You Trust?



**As an infant you had no choice of care providers. Depending on whether they fed, clothed, and comforted you when you cried, you learned to trust or distrust. You now can choose people you think are trustworthy.**

As a child, in what ways did you learn to trust or distrust?

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How did your experiences influence your current expectations of people and relationships?

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List at least three qualities that make someone trustworthy.

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Share circumstances where you might not trust yourself.

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In what ways do you absolutely trust yourself?

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## Whom Do You Trust?

### FOR THE FACILITATOR

#### I. Purpose

To consider past and present issues regarding trust.

#### II. General Comments

Teens may ask and answer questions in an interview format or write responses privately.

#### III. Possible Activities

- a. Ask teens to describe their favorite talk shows.
- b. Explain they will be answering questions privately or in an interview format.
- c. These are very delicate questions and if too revealing for a talk show or newspaper article format, the page can be used as a journaling activity.
- d. Remind teens when journaling or sharing aloud to use name codes.

##### Journaling Format

- Distribute the *Whom Do You Trust?* handout and allow time for completion.
- Allow teens to share their responses within their comfort levels and as appropriate for a group setting. (Remind them to use name codes).

##### Talk Show Format

- Teens take turns sitting in pairs at the front of the room; one reads the questions and the other answers; then the guest who responded becomes the interviewer.
- Only the first host reads aloud the statement at the top; subsequent interviewers read only the questions.
- Peers in the audience may ask questions or provide feedback.

##### Newspaper Article Format

- Teens sit in pairs and take turns reading the questions and writing the partner's responses.
- They may re-convene and share their articles aloud with the group.

#### IV. Enrichment Activities

- a. Encourage teens to brainstorm trustworthy traits; a volunteer lists their ideas on the board. Possibilities include a person who ...
  - Carries out a responsibility.
  - Keeps a promise.
  - Keeps a secret (unless it involves harm to self, others, abuse, suicidal thoughts, etc.).
  - Demonstrates honesty, loyalty, reliability.
  - Acts in private the way he/she would with the world watching.
- b. Encourage teens to address trust issues through activities:
  - Making posters.
  - Composing slogans, poems or song lyrics.
  - Performing mock videos or commercials.
  - Trust walk – blindfold and walk with a sighted partner over a simple, safe obstacle course.