

Warm Up Activities for Youth Work Trainings: *Think back to your teen years...*

Activity 1

Large group, sitting at tables: When we talk about adolescents and youth development, it is always good to start with remembering what it was like when we were teenagers. So, think back to when you were in high school -- 14 or 15 years old. What was it like for you?

Turn to your neighbor and share:

What was the most exciting thing that happened to you during that time?

Turn to your other neighbor and share:

What was the most challenging thing that happened to you?

Give people a couple of minutes to share. Then ask for volunteers to mention some of the exciting things that happened, and the challenging things that happened.

You can add other questions.

Activity 2

Material: index cards, each with one number on it (numbers 12-17)

Place one index card in front of each person, number side down.

We want to start off by thinking about what it was like when you were growing up. This is just to get us in the right frame of mind for talking about adolescents. So pick up the card in front you. The number on your card represents the age. Take a minute to think back to when you were this age.

- What was going on at home? Where did you live?
- What was going in school? After school?
- Who were the important people in your life?

Partner up with a person you don't know and share your experience.

Debrief with the whole group: Who were the important people? What were people engaged in, both in school and after school? What were the challenges?

Activity 3

Let's play a little game to get to know each other. It's called mingle, mingle, huddle, huddle.

Here are the rules: We all get up and gather in this free space over there. When I say "mingle, mingle," walk around and introduce yourself to people you have not met yet. Just like a cocktail party. Shake hands, introduce yourself, say where you are from, and move on to the next person.

When I say “huddle, huddle,” quickly form a group of four with the people around you. Once you all are in groups I will give you a question to talk about.

Start mingling. After a couple of minutes, say “huddle, huddle.” Once they are all in groups ask them to share with each other. Sample questions:

- When you were in high school, what was your biggest achievement?
- Back in high school, what were the “in” groups?
- Back in high school, what was the cool thing to do?
- What kind of risks did you take as a teenager?
- What was the dress code?

Give groups 2-3 minutes to share during the huddle time. Then say again “mingle, mingle.” Alternate mingle, mingle with huddle, huddle periods. Pose 2-3 questions for each huddle.

Activity 4

Ask participants to take a minute to think back to high school and remember two times when they were struggling. What was going on? Have them think about what or who helped them get through these tough periods. And what did they learn about themselves?

Ask participants to gather in a free area and form two concentric circles (even number required), one outside circle and one inside circle. People on the inside and outside are facing each other, forming a pair.

Ask the pairs to shake hands, introduce themselves, and talk about the first challenge: how they handled it, who or what helped them, and what they learned about themselves. The people in the outer circle go first. After a minute, the people in the inner circle share their experience.

When they are done, ask all the people in the outer circle to move two steps to the right so that they face another person in the inner circle (2 people over). This time they will share the second episode they remembered. People on the inside will go first.

Debrief. Ask volunteers to report what they heard. Who or what helped them to overcome challenges? What did they learn about themselves?

Activity 5

Have participants form two parallel lines (even number required) facing each other in a free area. Ask participants to introduce themselves to the person they are facing. Pose a question. They will share their experiences related to the question. Then ask participants of one line to move one step/person over to the right. The person at the end of line has to cross over to the other line. That line has to move over to the right as well, and the person at the end also has to cross over.

Sample questions:

- In high school: What was the clothing style at the time?
- What was going on in school?

- What was happening after school?
- What music were you listening to?
- What was your favorite TV show or movie?
- What did you do and never told your parents about?
- What were some of the risky behaviors you got into?
- Who were the important people in your life?
- Who were your heroes?

Debrief.

Activity 6

Material: prepared newsprint divided into four sections, markers

Thinking back to your teenage years, how would you describe yourself?

1. What type of activity did you engage in in your free time?
2. How did you do in school?
3. What was your dominant mood?
4. What was your relationship like with your parents/family?

Write down key words in the newsprint quadrants. Debrief comments and observations.

Activity 7

Material: blank pieces of paper, markers for all participants.

Small group activity.

I would like you to take a piece of paper and a couple of markers. Use your creativity and draw a picture of yourself as a teenager. The picture should tell what you were like, so please include/express on paper what was important to you. *(Take 5-10 minutes.)*

When everybody is done, ask participants, one at a time, to hold up their picture and tell the group about the teen in the picture.

Activity 8

Prior to the event ask participants to think about their teen years and to bring an object with them that represents or symbolizes this time for them. This can be a fun way to start a training or workshop. Ask participants to place the objects that symbolize their teen years on the table in front them. Invite them to introduce themselves to the group and share what the object represents and means. Ask for a volunteer to go first.

Personal example: I would bring a tennis ball because I started playing tennis at 14, and it became a very positive and powerful experience for me. I developed new skills and proficiency. I also gained a whole new set of friends. It dramatically changed my life – instead of spending most of my free time reading

alone in my room, I spent my time being physically active, excelling at a new sport, surrounded by a large circle of friends.

Activity 9

Material: Sheets of newsprint, pre-labeled: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s; tape, markers.
Tape the sheets on the walls around the room.

Ask the group to think about which decade they attended high school. Was it in the '60s or '70s or '80s (etc.)? Participants will gather at the sheet labeled with the decade that represents their high school years. Distribute markers. Ask each group to discuss and write down:

1. What was school like for them? What was going on?
2. What were they wearing? Clothing style?
3. What music were they listening to?

Give them roughly 10 minutes to do that.

Finally ask: What was the buzz word of their generation? (Example: groovy, cool, awesome...)

Each group will report out on their time period. Debrief comments and observations.