

Thinking about change

Everyone has things about themselves and their environment they would like to change. Many people would like to change how they react to distress or provocation, develop a skill or talent, have a better social life or change something about their physical appearance or where they live.

Some people would like to make huge changes, others might just like to tweak a couple of things. Some people are very realistic about the changes they could make and the effort it would take, others less so. However big or small, change takes effort and needs to be planned for.

The activities in this section are about planning and managing positive change, to enable young people to get more out of life and achieve their goals. It is important to remember that vulnerable young people have often experienced a great deal of change and disruption in their lives, so keep activities focused on positive change.

Activity 18 is about young people practising how to state assertively and clearly what they want or need – without judgement and blame – so they can avoid using aggression or anti-social behaviour to express their frustrations.

Activity 19 invites young people to think about some of the changes they would like to make and what the implications of those changes are.

Activity 20 looks at obstacles to change. Some obstacles are external (poverty and discrimination), others are internal (a lack of confidence, fear, self-doubt and negativity). Often we accept life the way it is rather than facing the obstacles to achieving our goals and making the most of our abilities. Each of us faces obstacles, but it is through overcoming life's challenges that we grow.

In identifying our obstacles it is important to realise the importance of our attitude. Everyone sees the world differently, depending on how they grew up and the circumstances they have encountered. Emotions, fears and life experiences play a big role in determining how we view our reality.

Learning outcomes

Young people will:

- be able to state assertively what changes they would like to see happen (Activity 18)
- be able to identify the changes they want to make in their lives (Activity 19)
- be able to identify obstacles to change and implement strategies for overcoming the obstacles (Activity 20).

You will need

- one copy per participant of Worksheet 15: *Actions for change*
- flip chart paper
- two pens.

Suggested icebreakers:

What I would be

What I did

(See page 21)



Activity 18: *I statements*

1. Ask young people to think of a situation they have got annoyed about in the past.
2. In pairs or as individuals ask the young people to work on an 'I statement'. Encourage young people to help each other to make the statements 'clear' and 'clean'. Remind the group it is important for them not to use names but to focus instead on the situation or circumstance.)
 - When you...
 - I feel...
 - And what I want from you is...
3. Back in the whole group, invite participants to feed back with a few examples. Give others an opportunity to offer suggestions about how the statements might be improved.
4. Open up a discussion around the following:
 - how and when could you use 'I' statements?
 - what kind of effect do you think making an 'I' statement could have?

Reflection

What did you find easy or difficult about making an 'I' statement?

How can making an 'I' statement help a situation?

How would you use it in real-life situations?

What is the most helpful thing you have learned today?

Facilitators note

Using 'I' statements is a basic assertiveness tool that can be used directly with young people's own experiences. The key principles to remember are:

- 'I' statements do not offer instant solutions to problems. They are a way of opening up a discussion and inviting the other person's participation in helping to solve it. They don't always work first time and the original statement may have to be repeated several times or new ones developed as the discussion gets going.
- The format can seem strange to start. It is made from your point of view, stating how you feel and not blaming the other person for it. You take responsibility for the situation and make suggestions about what you could both do about it. It makes no demands and opens up possibilities rather than closing them down. It is the beginning of the communication rather than the answer to a problem.

'I' statements should be specific and to the point ('clear'), and free from judgements and blame ('clean'). They contain three basic elements:

- a statement of fact describing an action
- a description of how you feel about that action in which you take responsibility for the feeling rather than blaming the other person
- a declaration of the change that you desire.

The opposite of an 'I' statement is a 'You' statement. An example of each is given below:

- 'You make me so angry: you're always late. Why can't you ever arrive on time?' (You statement)
- 'When you arrange to meet me at a certain time and are late, I feel irritated and hurt. What I would like is for us to arrange a time to meet that we are both able to make.' (I statement)



Activity 19: **Actions for change**

1. Give each young person a copy of Worksheet 15 and ask them to fill it in.
2. When they have completed the worksheets ask for any volunteers to tell the group what they would like to change and how they think they could do so.
3. Ask those who volunteered if they would like the group to comment on:
 - whether their plan for change sounded realistic and, if not, how it could be made more realistic
 - how the group could support them in making the change.
4. Ask all group members to decide on a start date and an achievable date for when their changes could be made. Tell them you will follow this up to see how they are getting on.

Reflection

What have you learnt about your goal in this activity?

How easy was it to identify a realistic change you would like to make?

Do you think you will succeed in making a change?



Activity 20: **My life in my hands**

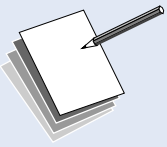
1. Divide young people into small groups and ask them to identify on a piece of flip chart paper:
 - one thing they have always wanted to do in their life but never acted on
 - the external and internal barriers they feel are keeping them from achieving their goal and dream
 - ideas for how they might overcome each of these and make them happen, both long term and short term
 - an idea for something they could do today as a first step.
2. If you think it would resonate with your group, share this quote from the Chinese Taoist philosopher, Lao Tsu: 'A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step'.

Reflection

Had you thought about what stops you making changes before?

Who can help you overcome barriers?

What is the most important thing you have learned in this session?



Worksheet 15: Actions for change

Name.....Date set.....Deadline.....	
My goal [write or draw a picture of your goal]:	
I will achieve this by:	
Action points:	By when:
Things that will help me achieve this are:	
I will know I have achieved my goal because:	
Tick off the action points as you do them, to help you meet your goal	