

Exploring Experiences

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Estimated time:	85 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [20 minutes] Activity #1• [30 minutes] Activity #2• [35 minutes] Assignment Depending on the time you have allotted for each group meeting, we suggest you engage in the “Assignment” in your second group convening.
Group or individual activity:	Group
Ages:	12-16 years old
Grades:	Grades 7-10
Online / offline elements:	This learning experience includes two offline activities and an offline assignment.
Areas:	Main area: Digital Economy Additional areas: Identity Exploration and Formation
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Learning Goal

Participants will learn to identify specific experiences that have shaped who they are today, reflect on how such experiences might be powerful for their future, and consider ways they can create new experiences that help them achieve their goals.

Materials

- [One per participant] [Handout: Taking on a New Challenge](#)
- [One per participant] [Handout: My Goal Plan](#)
- [For educator] Computer with Internet access
- Projector and projection screen
- Flip chart (or poster) [If a board is not available]
- Marker
- [One per participant] Paper
- [One per participant] Pens or pencils

Resources

- [Step Outside of Your Comfort Zone](#) - by Andy Molinsky (TEDx Talks)

Activity #1: How Experiences Make Us Unique

SAY:

- Let's begin today by thinking about our experiences — more specifically, our past experiences, and how they impact the way we interact with the world around us.
- Our individual experiences are what make each of us unique. We all have a diverse set of past experiences — some of which particularly stand out to us.
- We may call these very important memories “core memories.” They are events that happened in the past that have become central to our identity and personality.
- For example, maybe you're really passionate about playing the piano, and one of your core memories is when you first successfully played a really challenging piece. Or perhaps family is really important to you, and one of your

core memories is of a holiday you all happily celebrated when you were younger.

- Sometimes, our core memories are happy. Or, they can be sad, silly, or serious — maybe even a combination of these emotions!
- Regardless of the nature of these experiences, they have caused us to see the world in unique ways.

SAY:

- Now, I'd like you to choose at least one of your most memorable experiences and discuss it in pairs. Why is it memorable? How has the memory shaped who you are today? You'll have 10 minutes to discuss with your partner.

[Organize participants into pairs. Give participants 10 minutes to discuss these questions.]

ASK:

- Does anyone want to share one of their most memorable experiences?
- After reflecting on how these experiences have helped define your personality, has anyone learned anything new or surprising about themselves?

Activity #2: Creating New Experiences

SAY:

- We all have different memories that give us a unique way of viewing and interacting with the world.
- Some of these memories particularly stand out to us — core memories — and help define who we are.
- [If you've already completed Activity #1: How Experiences Make Us Unique, feel free to disregard the following examples.] For example, let's say you really love reading and writing poetry — your love for poetry is part of what makes you, you! Maybe one of your core memories is of a family member reading poems to you when you were younger. Or maybe you're passionate about travel and exploring new parts of the world. Perhaps one of your core memories is an amazing trip you took outside of the country when you were younger.

SAY:

- While our past experiences impact our identity, depending on the choices we make, we can always create new memorable and exciting experiences — experiencing new adventures and making new connections to people and places.
- Some of these choices can seem insignificant. But even making small changes in our day-to-day decisions can have a lasting impact.
- Say, for instance, you really want to learn the guitar, but are worried you don't have the time, given school work and other activities outside of school. During the week, you only have about an hour of free time each day, and you spend this time relaxing by watching TV. It is super important to do things that relax us, but what if you took just 15 minutes out of that hour to practice the guitar each day, or every other day? Over time, this would help you get better and better and build your confidence in playing the guitar!

SAY:

- Today, you're going to each choose one medium-sized goal (i.e., a goal that you feel would take you at least several weeks to accomplish) that you've always wanted to achieve but have felt was too challenging, and think about how you might accomplish this. This can be anything from becoming more mindful to exercising regularly, to learning about an area you've always been curious about (like photography or a certain period from history).
- Let's begin by taking the next 15 minutes to fill out some questions that will help you start thinking of the goal you want to achieve and strategies you can use to reach it.

[Pass out the Taking on a New Challenge Handout and pens or pencils. Give participants 15 minutes to complete the handout.]

SAY:

- Let's come back together.
- First, when you approach new problems, it's really important that you think about what is motivating you.
- Our purpose helps drive us forward when we hit roadblocks as we work towards our goals.
- It's also helpful to consider your past experiences. More specifically, think about challenging goals you've accomplished in the past and how you achieved those goals. Were there certain strategies you used — maybe based on past experiences — that were really successful?
- Suppose, for instance, that you have a goal to exercise more frequently. Maybe one strategy you used in the past is exercising at a certain time of day that works

really well for you — like first thing in the morning. Or, based on past experiences, you know that you enjoy things the most when you do them with a friend. If your goal is to exercise more often, maybe one strategy could be to exercise together with a friend.

ASK:

- Does anyone want to share a time when they faced a challenging goal in the past, and how they achieved it? Did your past experiences shape how you approached the challenge?

[Write down some of the participants' responses on a flip chart / poster or board. Some ideas might serve as an inspiration for others.]

SAY:

- Great! Thanks for sharing these!
- When you think of trying something new, sometimes you can feel held back by fear — fear of not doing or saying the right things or letting others down, and of ultimately not succeeding.
- But, there are ways to overcome this fear. For example, being able to see a situation in a clearer way can help you adjust how you view the scenario so that certain ways of thinking (like, “I’m too inexperienced to do X!”) don’t get in the way of achieving your goals.
- There are a few ways you can develop a clearer way to think about new challenges.
- One way you can do this is by thinking about what someone else would tell you if you told them what you wanted to achieve. If you told, let’s say, one of your friends about a new challenge you want to take on, what do you think they would say? How would they provide support?
- Another way is by directly asking a friend — or someone else you trust, like a family member, educator, or mentor — for advice.

ASK:

- Have you tried anything in the past that helped you view a goal or problem from a different perspective that ultimately helped you see the solution to the challenge in a clearer way?

Assignment

SAY:

- Now, let's come back to the challenge you'd like to accomplish that you wrote down on your Taking on a New Challenge Handout.
- When you begin something new that seems difficult, it can be really helpful to think of three key things that we discussed today:
 - First, [our purpose\(s\) and things that motivate us](#).
 - Second, [ways we have successfully approached difficult experiences in the past and what we have learned from these past experiences](#).
 - And third, [ways we can gain a new perspective around a challenge](#).
 - [Write these down on a flip chart / poster or board.]
- Let's take what we've learned and apply them by mapping out actual first steps you can take to accomplish your goal!
- I'm going to hand out a four-week planner where I want you to write, for each week, at least two things you can do to work towards the goal you want to achieve. These steps don't have to be huge — they could take up to just 10 to 15 minutes per week! Think about how, if at all, your past experiences have shaped the steps you plan to take, and write this down in the third column of your handout. You'll have the next 10 minutes to do this.

[Pass out the My Goal Plan Handout. Give participants 10 minutes to work on the handout.]

ASK:

- Does anyone want to share some steps they're going to take to try to achieve their goal?
- Have past experiences shaped the steps you intend to take? If so, how?

SAY:

- Thanks for sharing these great ways you're going to work towards your goal!
- Today, we learned that while your past experiences have helped shape who you are today, you are always able to create new, challenging, and exciting experiences, even by taking small steps.
- Looking ahead, I'd love for you to work towards your goal using the steps you've written down. Feel free to update your friends and family on your progress!

Taking on a New Challenge Handout

1. What are some things that give you purpose and meaning in life? This might be anything from being a kind friend to others to succeeding in school, or practicing a religion.
2. When people approach a new project or activity, there's not only *one* successful way to do so. We can approach new, challenging situations in a way that works *uniquely for us*. For example, maybe when you had to take a particularly hard biology test, to prepare, you made a lot of flashcards, versus just reading the material as you normally do for science tests. Or maybe when you wanted to learn a new skill, like creative writing, you practiced in the morning, when you're most productive. Think of a time when you tried something new you found challenging — a past experience. Write down some of the strategies you used to achieve this goal that worked particularly well for you.
3. What is one challenging, medium-sized goal (i.e., the goal should take you at least several weeks to achieve) you want to accomplish?

My Goal Plan Handout

Based on the goal you wrote down on the “Taking on a New Challenge” Handout, write down at least two things you plan to do each week (even if it only takes 10 minutes!) to help you achieve this goal. Additionally, indicate how (if at all) you feel that your past experiences can help you take the steps to achieve your goal.

	Each week, what steps do you plan to take to achieve this goal?	Is there something that you learned from past experiences that can help you accomplish the goal? If so, add it here.
Week 1		
Week 2		
Week 3		
Week 4		