PART 1: CELEBRATING GIRLS' LEADERSHIP SUPERPOWERS

Overview

Goals:

Teens are introduced to an expansive definition of leadership and begin exploring how their values and strengths can help them make a positive impact as leaders.

Why these sessions matter:

Many girls encounter limiting assumptions that make it harder for them to see themselves—and be seen by others—as leaders. These assumptions often center on what girls are (and aren't) good at. For example, some studies suggest that less than a quarter of girls believe they have the skills they need to lead effectively and that girls are less likely than boys to say they're good at making decisions, dealing with conflict, and taking charge. But girls are also limited by common assumptions about leadership itself. Research shows that traditional "command and control" definitions of leadership are still top of mind for many girls, even though very few girls find this view of leadership inspiring. Girls—and all teens—may also get the message that leadership is only open to adults and people in formal positions of authority. Early adolescence is a key time to challenge these limiting beliefs, as girls are deeply engaged in exploring and redefining their identities.

Approach:

These sessions focus on helping teens recognize and celebrate the ways they're already making an impact as leaders by providing the toolkit needed to successfully articulate their values and explore their leadership strengths.

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Put Your Values Into Actions

Session goals:

Participants identify their personal values and explore how values connect to everyday leadership.

Key takeaways:

- Values are ways of being that we believe are important, like being honest or inclusive.
- Values are personal, and we get to choose the values that matter most to us.
- Our values help guide our decisions and the ways we show up as leaders.

Lean Into Your Strengths

Session goals:

Teens recognize and celebrate their leadership strengths.

Key takeaways:

- There are lots of leadership strengths, from courage and decisiveness to kindness and patience.
- Teens already have leadership strengths that they use every day.
- Strengths aren't fixed—it's possible to build new leadership strengths over time.

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PART 2: CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES & INSPIRING GIRLS TO GO FOR IT

Overview

Goals:

Teens build awareness of external forces that may discourage them from setting bold goals and taking risks, and gain tools to navigate risk and failure on their own terms.

Why these sessions matter:

Risk and failure are part of leading. But for a variety of reasons, they're often higher-stakes for girls. Many girls are socialized to care deeply about what others think of them, which leads to feelings of self-consciousness when they try new things and devastation when they face rejection or criticism. Some girls face additional pressure because they've been taught that their success and failures affect the reputation of their entire community or they're expected to help support their families. Depending on their mix of identities, girls may also have to contend with stereotypes that discourage them from acting boldly—or they may have found that their bold actions are often minimized or even penalized. And when girls do try and fail, teachers and caregivers are more likely to attribute their failure to inherent weakness or lack of talent instead of simple lack of practice. All of this can lead girls to be more reluctant to take risks, more afraid of failure, and more vulnerable to burnout.

Approach:

These sessions give teens tools to navigate external pressures related to risk and failure, with the goal of helping them take healthy risks, weather setbacks, and persevere toward bold goals. The first session builds foundational knowledge and awareness of stereotypes that can make it harder for girls to act boldly and to be seen as leaders when they do. From there, we focus on simple, evidence-based strategies for countering the negative effects of stereotypes and social pressure to succeed—such as positive self-talk, reframing setbacks as opportunities, and distinguishing between healthy drive and unhealthy perfectionism.

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Challenging Stereotypes

Session goals:

Teens can recognize limiting stereotypes about girls and challenge stereotypes by countering them with accurate self-descriptions.

Key takeaways:

- Stereotypes are biased assumptions about what girls are like (or should be like).
- Girls can experience different stereotypes depending on their unique mix of identities.
- We can't make stereotypes go away—but we can reduce their power by countering them with accurate information.

Reframe Failure

Session goals:

Teens learn about unfair messages that can make girls more likely to fear failure. To make setbacks feel more manageable, they practice finding the wins hiding in each "failure," such as opportunities to learn, grow, and be proud of your efforts.

Key takeaways:

- If you're afraid of failing, it's not just you—many girls get messages that make failure feel scarier than it should be, or that encourage them to stop trying when they fall short of their goals.
- Fear of failure can keep people from dreaming big, but you can push back against limiting messages by recognizing that setbacks are normal and help you grow.

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Embrace Risk-Taking

Session goals:

Teens understand the benefits of taking positive risks and practice identifying risks they can take right now.

Key takeaways:

- Taking risks (including some that don't pay off!) is a normal part of pursuing big goals.
- We tend to think mostly about what might go wrong if we take a risk, but it's important to also think about what might go right.

Set Bold & Healthy Goals

Session goals:

Teens recognize the negative impact of unhealthy pressure and can identify when they're feeling internal or external pressure to meet impossible standards.

Key takeaways:

- Girls often experience pressure to please others and live up to unreasonably high expectations.
- Attempting to meet unreasonable expectations is exhausting and can leave you without the time and energy to put your own values into action.
- It's okay to aim for "good enough" at some things to free up time and energy for the things that mean the most to you.

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BONUS SESSION: CELEBRATE!

Goals:

Teens recognize and celebrate the ways they've grown as leaders, and commit to finding meaningful opportunities to take the lead.

Why these sessions matter:

The closing session brings the program full circle by giving teens an opportunity to reflect on how they've grown as leaders, set bold goals that will motivate them to continue their leadership journeys, and celebrate the connections they've built as a group.

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