

Lead a series of youth workshops – *Lesson 6: Mental Remix*

Once in a while, we need a Mental Remix. This final session in the Change to Chill series focuses on mentally remixing how we deal with stress. Teens work in teams or individually to investigate something they can share with the larger group so that everyone has a chance to learn a new skill and stress less.

What You Need

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Pen or pencil (one for each participant)
- Copies of [“Stepping Outside the Box” worksheet \(pdf\)](#)
- Copies of the [Affirmations Activity \(pdf\)](#) (one for each participant)
- Ball (or another small object) to be passed along during the Reflect activity

Step 1: Check In – Guided Imagery

Ask participants to share which situations they used guided imagery since your last meeting. What impact did it make? Ask them to describe what it felt like.


Step 2: Mental Remix Video and Discussion

Each person sees and experiences the world differently. No one is accurate or right in their reality, their reality just is what it is. When we understand that and learn to respect other people’s “maps of the world,” we become more resilient. That does not mean we have to like, agree or be the same as each other. Respect leads to understanding, and understanding leads to compromise, negotiation and change. Without respect there is judgment. Judgment leads to bias, conflict and not being able to move forward.

For example, Google maps and GPS directions don’t always match the actual streets, houses or buildings, right? In the same way, the maps or filters we have in our minds don’t always match what’s happening in our lives. When this is the case, when our lives are going ways that don’t fit with what we want or expect, it causes a stress response. This is similar to how a traveler on an unfamiliar road trip might panic if the directions said take Exit 3C to the east at 7th Street and there was no exit at 7th Street. The more we can be aware of our “maps”, the more we can adjust and adapt as needed. We can change the way we are thinking, change what we’re doing, or both. This is called a Mental Remix.

Show the Mental Remix video to the group.

Mental Remix video: <https://youtu.be/WZ27b1wbyxU>

A decorative horizontal band with a blue wavy, wood-grain-like pattern runs across the top of the page, below the logo.

After the group has watched the video, explain that we all experience stress. Its how we deal with it that makes a difference in our overall perspective. Encourage participants to mentally remix their next stressful event and write down three ways they can turn things around.

Step 3: Get Some Perspective

Help participants get perspective on things that matter by reading through the following scenarios and answering questions together in large or small groups.

1. One story about a person is just one story, not the whole person.

Read the statement above and ask the group the following questions:

- Has anyone had an embarrassing moment or period of life that others saw or heard about? Have you ever made a mistake or decision you regretted?
- What if that moment got labeled and that's all you were ever seen as? What would it feel like if people judged your character only based on that information? Would that paint a true picture or you?
- Has this happened to you or someone you know? Does it feel fair?

Give them time share stories or share a story of your own and relate the experiences back to the idea of perspective.

2. There are no failures, only feedback.

Read the statement above and ask the following questions:

- Have you ever tried something and felt like it didn't go the way you hoped? Did it feel like a failure?
- Did you try again? What happened the next time?
- Has anyone ever provided you with feedback you didn't like or didn't want to hear?
- Did you let the feedback define who you are as a person?

Ask someone to share an experience and discuss as a group.

Tell participants that any time something doesn't go the way they want, they have a choice: they can view it was a failure or they can view it as an opportunity to learn from the feedback of it not going the way they wanted. It is okay to make mistakes and the most important part of mistakes is what you learn from them – failure is what didn't happen and feedback is what did happen.

3. The person with the greatest flexibility has the best chance to make things better.

It's nice when things go exactly as planned, but sometimes they don't. Ask the group if this has ever happened to them, then present the scenario below:

"Let's say we are going to the movies. The bus pulls up and we all get on. But when we arrive at the theater we see it is closed. What do we do now? Do we come back here and cry?"

Ask them what an alternative option could be – could we decide to do something completely different? What if the alternative option was 100 times more fun than the movie would have been? Give participants time to share response and their experiences related to this topic.

Stepping Outside the Box Activity

Next, explain that when we feel boxed in by not knowing how to get out of a bad situation, solve a problem, or are overwhelmed by others' opinions, we can always step outside the box and exercise creativity.

Have participants complete the "Stepping Outside the Box" worksheet.

Once everyone has completed the activity, have participants flip the sheet over to see the answer. Explain that most people approach the exercise thinking that they need to stay within the lines of what they perceive as the box around the dots. The activity is meant to help teens see the answers through a different lens.

[Stepping Outside the Box worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

4. The more time we spend in the stress response, the less resilient we become.

Ask the following questions:

- Has a stressful situation made it hard for you to concentrate or treat people the way you normally would?
- Has a friend been so stressed that they treated you poorly?

Give them a moment to nod or respond to these questions. Share with the group that when we are stressed it can be hard to react positively to normal daily situations and, similarly, that it is easy to take things personally when someone is treating us poorly when they are stressed.

Next, choose from the following activities:

1. Play the [Two Arrows video](#) and have a discussion about how this idea relates to participants' stress responses.

2. Have participants jot down something that is frustrating or causing them stress. Then have them list 3-5 things that could help them manage that stress. (Examples might include deep breathing, going for a walk or talking with a friend.)

5. Everyone has a unique map of the world.

Revisit the movie scenario from part three. Tell the following scenario:

“Let’s say we were able to see the movie we wanted to see in the earlier scenario. All [INSERT # PARTICIPANTS] of us hop on the bus and this time actually see the movie. After the movie is over and we are walking out of the theater we will have experienced [INSERT # PARTICIPANTS] movies!”

Wait for participants’ reactions to this last statement. Explain that our beliefs, attitudes, physiology and past experiences play a part in how each of us sees the movie in a different way.

Next, give an example of reading your favorite book, or one that you have read many times. Explain that each time you read it, it means something completely different to you, depending on what is going on in your life at that time.

Conclude with explaining that our maps of the world are always changing as we gain more knowledge and experience more things. No one is accurate or right in their reality. When we understand this and learn to respect other peoples’ “maps of the world” we become more resilient through respect and understanding.

Step 4: Positive Affirmations

Another way to Mental Remix is to practice positive affirmations.

Explain to participants that thoughts that get repeated the most change the structure of our brains. They do this by strengthening the connection between the brain cells responsible for that thought pattern. When you pay more attention to your negative thoughts, you strengthen those brain cells and will hear those messages more often. It can start to feel impossible to escape negative thoughts. But you can re-train your brain to strengthen your positive thought patterns instead.

One way to do this is by practicing positive affirmations. Positive affirmations are encouraging messages you speak, write or think to yourself to support yourself. They help interrupt patterns of negative thought, build self-compassion and help achieve desired behaviors.

Practicing daily affirmations can help increase positive thought patterns and the way you see yourself. Explain that only speaking affirmations doesn't retrain your brain. To really see results, you must take time to:

1. review your thoughts
2. set an intention
3. practice
4. take action.

Walk participants through the [Affirmations Activity](#). Invite participants to establish an affirmations practice routine and reflect on how it feels to hear these encouragements from themselves.

Step 5: Meditation

Show the Change to Chill Meditation video.

Invite participants to get in a comfortable position and inform them they can either watch the full video quietly or close their eyes and just listen.

At the end, take a few minutes to discuss what they thought of the experience.

Meditation video: <https://youtu.be/uZX4v4lw2Mc>

Step 6: Reflect

As a final step in this practice of Changing to Chill, take some time as a group to reflect on what you've done and what you've learned. Gather in a circle, sitting or standing. Explain to participants that you are going to ask a question and if someone would like to answer, they can raise their hand and you will pass the ball (or whatever object you have) to them. Once that person is done speaking, they can pass the ball to someone else who would like to answer the same question.

When you are ready to ask a different question and all participants who wanted to share have shared, ask that the object be tossed back to you. After participants answer each question, take time to summarize what they said or expand on the thoughts they shared. Here are questions that can be used:

1. What did you like best about Change to Chill?
2. What did you like least about Change to Chill?
3. What did you learn by participating in these lessons and activities?
4. What are two or three words you can use to describe how you feel these lessons and activities?
5. What, if anything, will you do differently in your life because of the experiences you gained through Change to Chill?