



Session 3: Introducing the Tools

Workshop Summary

Teens identify “tools” they already use to cope with and manage transitions, and are exposed to new strategies, which they’ll use to create a personalized toolbox in the following session.

Time: 2 hours

Materials: Bag of M&Ms, flipchart/whiteboard, blank paper, markers, pens, sticky notes

Goals:

1. Teens will learn that managing emotional transitions requires the use of tools, or strategies, to help us cope and adapt.
2. Teens will identify tools they already use to manage transitions, and be able to categorize them according to the Transitions Framework.
3. Teens will identify new tools that will be helpful to them.
4. Teens will create a “toolbox” of resources and strategies for managing transitions.

Activity 1: M&Ms Check-In (10 minutes)

- Invite each teen to take up to four M&Ms, telling them that for each M&M they take, they have to share one thing about themselves. One M&M is reserved for telling something—good or bad—that happened to them during the week, and one should be for sharing how they’re feeling right now. The rest can be used to share any other things they want the group to know about them.

Note: Explain to teens that they’ll use this activity to check in at the beginning of every session. This can be a time for them to mention anything that’s on their mind, but make sure to note that the group won’t have time to discuss anyone’s situation in detail or give feedback.

The purpose of the check-in is not to get into an involved discussion of anyone’s particular issues, nor is it to allow teens to excuse themselves from participating in the workshop that day. It’s simply a space for everyone to decompress and let go of whatever is on their mind before they start the workshop.

Activity 2: Risks and Benefits of Looking Back (15 minutes)



Tell the teens:

Today we’re going to reflect on changes that we have experienced in the past. We’ll look at things we did that were helpful, and other things that were not so helpful. Knowing how we’ve tended to react to change in the past will help us figure out the most helpful ways of facing change in the future.

This can be a difficult exercise, because it might remind us of painful experiences we’ve gone through. It can also be an

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exercise that makes us stronger, since if we are able to reflect on the past now, we will probably be more able to face those feelings when they resurface in the future, when we are trying to manage new transitions in our lives.

- Draw a two-column chart on the board with these headings:

Benefits	Risks

Tell the teens there are benefits and risks of reflecting on the past, and those are important to keep in mind. Ask them to write down on a blank sheet of paper three *benefits* of reflecting on the past, and three *risks*.

After a couple of minutes, go around the group and have teens read out what they have written down. Write their responses on the board and discuss.

Activity 3: Change vs. Transition (30 minutes)

- Read aloud the “Change vs. Transition” worksheet on p. 34 in the Teen Journal. Give the group a couple of examples from your own life as a model.

- Ask teens to complete the chart on p. 35 in their journals. Circulate to check for understanding and verify that teens are differentiating between change and transition.

After about 15 minutes, ask for a few volunteers to share a change/transition they wrote about, or anything they noticed (e.g., do they

tend to react to change in the same ways every time, or have their responses changed as they’ve gotten older? Do they generally rely on the same kinds of strategies, or try different things? Etc.)

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Change vs. Transition

In the Transitions workshop, we talk about change as something that happens outside of yourself, that you usually can't control. Change prompts a transition *inside of us* as we try to cope and adapt to new circumstances.

In the left-hand column, copy down several changes you've been through in your life. Then, in the right-hand column, describe the emotional transition you went through as you moved through that change. The first one is an example.

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Changes in My Life <small>Things that happened (outside of you) What happened?</small>	My Process of Transition <small>How you reacted and adapted to the change What kinds of emotions did you go through as part of your transition? How did you cope?</small>
CHANGE: <i>Moved to a new school in fifth grade</i>	TRANSITION: <i>Felt angry, nervous and scared. I was fighting a lot. Then I got sent to the school social worker, who was nice. It made me feel relieved to have someone to talk to. I also made a few new friends. I started to feel calmer and safe.</i>
CHANGE:	TRANSITION:
CHANGE:	TRANSITION:
CHANGE:	TRANSITION:

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Activity 4: Recognizing Our Strengths
(25 minutes)

Ask participants to turn to p. 36 in their journals, an excerpt from Hattie Rice's diary "Flipping the Script." Ask for volunteers to take turns reading the story.



Tell the teens:

Remembering to notice our strengths can really help when we're going through difficult experiences. We're now going to read a journal entry by Hattie Rice, who tried to do exactly that as a way of helping herself cope with hard times.

We were introduced to Hattie in the first workshop, when we read that she felt very negative about herself, and her goal was to see if she could find anything positive to hold onto.

Let's read this excerpt about Hattie discovering positive aspects of herself.

Remembering to notice our strengths can really help when we're going through difficult experiences. Hattie tried to do exactly that as a way of helping herself cope with hard times.

Flipping the Script

How I stopped putting myself down

(Excerpted from Hattie's Transitions diary)

March 23

My constant self-criticism is not only crippling my self-esteem but also damaging my ability to try new things.

This week, I wrote some more about how I put myself down. This time, I wrote down some of the terrible criticisms I heard as a child, like: "Why you sitting here talking to the quiet b-tch?" and "I can't even sit next to her. Yo, shorty a straight weirdo."

I was shocked to remember that a girl in my class had the audacity to talk about me like that to my face. But writing down those insults surprised me because my feelings were less intense than I thought they would be, which was good. I even reread what I wrote, which I never do.

My journal writing left me in such good

spirits that I decided on the first action I would take to change: I decided that for the rest of the week, I'd tell myself good things anytime something negative happened. It worked—somewhat. If I started criticizing myself, I was able to stop and tell myself good things.

The problem was, I didn't believe a word that was coming out of my mouth. I truly felt like a compulsive liar. Despite telling myself all these good things, I still felt incompetent, deep down. But I think that I need to program my first thought to be positive, and eventually my feelings about myself might catch up.

April 6

Continuing with my theme of telling myself positive things, I planned this week to put Post-Its on my mirror with my positive characteristics written on each. That way, I'll wake up with good feelings about myself, and I'll be able to study my positive qualities. I also wrote an on-the-go list of my positive qualities in my journal so I'd always have it with me.

The list included: introspective, intelligent, considerate, understanding, timid, intuitive, intricate, broad-minded, caring, and able to disregard my emotions during times of stress.

April 13

This week I chose to write a story about a time in my life when I used all the positive characteristics I'd posted on my mirror. The story was a way to remind myself of my strength.

Here's what I wrote:

"When I was home with my mom, she refused to talk to me. In fact, she refused to talk to any of her family. (She has schizophrenia and was addicted to crack for years). Everyone else left her alone and ignored her crying.

"Although I was only 12, I was intelligent and intuitive enough to realize that my mom wasn't OK and needed help expressing herself. So instead of going to school, I was considerate and sensitive of her feelings—I stayed home with her every day.

"I wasn't sad to miss school. When I was younger, going to school was painful because I had only two outfits, my skin looked horrible, and my mom would mess up my hair. So you can imagine how much I got teased. (I am amazed I go to school today).

"That year I stayed home I was patient. I knew of my mom's violent nature, so I waited and eventually she opened up to me. She told me how she felt watched, and she pulled the blinds down. She told me that a boyfriend she'd had when she was 10 hypnotized her and was now having her watched.

She claimed my father was in on it, too.

"As far-fetched as her story was, I listened and did not interrupt. The story was unreal, but her pain was not. The situation made me feel strong yet scared. It was good that my mom had me to turn to, but who did I have?"

"Soon after that, I was placed in foster care. I am involved with my family but remain detached emotionally so I am able to live and not let their needs consume me. I still visit them, to show them my loyalty and let them know that they are irreplaceable."

Writing all of this down, I reminded myself of my strength and resilience. It was good to remember that there are reasons I have trouble feeling positive about my life, but also that the worst times are behind me.



Ask:

- How did Hattie feel about herself at the beginning of the story?
- What kinds of strengths did she discover about herself?
- Can anyone think of additional strengths that Hattie shows in the story that she doesn't write about?
- The change that Hattie was working on was trying to stop putting herself down. What were the specific things she did to help her manage this transition? Did they help?

Note: Students may pick up on the fact that Hattie learns how to set boundaries for herself, and that she shows some self-awareness in understanding how she operates during times of stress by “shutting down” emotions. If not, you might suggest these things. It's also important to note that something might be a strength in one situation and not as helpful in another situation. For example, if Hattie shuts down emotionally too often, that can create other problems, like being unable to process her emotions or know what she's really feeling. One of the important lessons of the Transitions workshop is in learning how to pick the best tool for a given situation.

Activity 4: Categorizing the Tools (35 minutes)



Tell the teens:

The specific things Hattie tried to help her stop putting herself down (like writing in a journal, using Post-It notes to remind herself of her positive qualities, etc.) are what we call “tools.” In the Transitions Framework, tools are basically strategies—the things we do to help us cope with a change and all of the emotions that go along with it so that we feel more control over our lives. Today, you'll identify some


useful tools for managing transitions, starting with tools you already use.

- Ask teens to turn to the “Types of Tools” box on p. 40 in their journals. Explain that there are five major kinds of tools, and read the descriptions aloud together.


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Types of Tools


Here are the five major types of transitions tools, along with a few examples of each tool. Can you think of more examples?




1. Seeking Information
Reading, talking to people, taking a class, or searching the Web to find out more about the issue you're facing.




2. Social Support
Figuring out who could be helpful to you, and reaching out to them for support. (For example, talking to a friend, a family member or a trusted teacher or counselor, connecting with others who have been through a similar situation, joining a new team, group, or club.)



3. Reflection and Experimentation
Reflection: Thinking deeply about the issues you're facing and exploring how you really feel. (For example, journaling, writing about a past experience, or going to therapy.)
Experimentation: Trying something different from what you normally do and seeing how it makes you feel. (For example, speaking up in class instead of keeping your head down.)



4. Rituals and Ceremonies
Ritual: An activity you do regularly that helps you feel comfortable or calm. (For example, a hot bath every Saturday morning, or meditating before you go to bed).
Ceremony: An activity that symbolizes a change you're making or want to make. (For example, writing a goodbye letter to someone you've lost, and then burying it.)



5. Rewards and Recognition
Taking the time to acknowledge your accomplishments, and doing something nice for yourself. (For example, writing down one positive thing about yourself every day, or buying yourself a special treat when you've reached a new goal or are going through a difficult time.)

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- Then, ask teens to turn the page to the “Tools in Action” sheet to see some specific examples of how other teens from the workshop used these kinds of tools. Ask for volunteers to read the testimonials aloud.

- Next, tell teens they're going to think about their own tools. Hand out several sticky notes to each teen. One each one, tell them to write down something they do or have done during times of change to help themselves manage transitions.

- On the board or a couple of sheets of flip chart paper, write down the five categories of

A LEADER'S GUIDE TO MANAGING TRANSITIONS FOR TEENS

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Tools in Action

Type of Tool: Seeking Information. Example: Read a book
Type of Tool: Ritual. Example: Writing in my diary

"I read a book called Path Finder about finding direction in your life. Once I finish reading a passage in the book, I write a progress note in my diary, so when I'm feeling down, I can look back and smile because I see how much I've grown over the months." —Erica



Type of Tool: Social Support. Example: Help from teachers and social workers

"With my future transition—changing schools—I used social support by figuring out that my teacher and social worker would be helpful, but my family would not. I feel more in control of what's happening because I'm choosing who I want to share this transition with me. I feel a little less likely to fall to pieces because so many people are telling me so many things." —Natasha

Type of Tool: Reflection. Example: Writing down my inner thoughts

"Since going to my new foster home, I haven't really felt comfortable talking to my foster mom, so as an alternative, I write to her to express myself. Simple situations angered me, so to avoid having an outburst at her, I started writing what I felt. I don't know how she interpreted it, but it felt good for me to express my inner thoughts." —Hattie



Type of Tool: Social Support. Example: Help from a mentor
Type of Tool: Reflection. Example: Thinking about important questions

"My mentor wrote down some questions for me to answer about how I worry so much and how that relates to me not being able to trust certain friends. In thinking about the questions, I learned that one reason I worry so much about this is that I haven't had healthy boundaries with my friends in the past." —Michael

Type of Tool: Reflection. Example: Writing out feelings

"Once I have dealt with an issue, I write about it as a state of closure. It's like writing away my past history to move on to a better future." —Erica



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Type of Tool: Experimenting with Behavior. Example: Opened up to my peers

"During my transition into foster care, I experimented with expressing my feelings and conversing with my peers. Before, I was quiet, but it was beautiful talking to people with similar situations. They didn't judge or criticize. Instead, they just let me express myself clearly and I felt free from the secrets that I'd held close for years." —Hattie

Type of Tool: Experimenting with Behavior. Example: Didn't scream and shout

"When I changed foster homes, I wanted to scream and shout and be upset, but I didn't allow myself to. I think that this helped me a lot in the long run because I held it together for myself and it made me feel OK for a while." —Natasha



Type of Tool: Experimenting with Behavior. Example: I tried to act happy. Experiments sometimes give results different from what we expected, but we still learn!

"It didn't really work because I tried to act like I was happy, but I really wasn't and usually I would be pissed off and do dumb things because I was just acting cool rather than trying to address the struggles I was going through inside. I realized that wasn't a good solution, because I was still upset." —Cynthia

Type of Tool: Experimenting with Behavior. Example: I tried to act macho

"When I moved to a new group home, I tried to act all macho but I didn't like the false persona it gave me. I realized it was important to me to be true to who I am, and if I could do that, I'd feel better about myself." —Miguel



Type of Tool: Rewards and Recognition. Example: Creating comfort

"I decided to surround myself with things that remind me of good times to make me feel comfortable and peaceful." —Michael



Type of Tool: Rewards and Recognition. Example: Celebrate my positive qualities

"I put sticky notes on my mirror with my positive characteristics written on them — one for each note. That way, I'll wake up every morning with good feelings about myself, and I'll be able to study my positive qualities." —Hattie



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tools as listed at the top of the "My Personal Tool Bank" chart on p. 43 in the Teen Journal.

- Collect all the sticky notes and shuffle them. Then ask teens to turn to the My Personal Tool Bank worksheet (p. 43) in their journals.
- Read aloud the tools that the group came up with, and ask the group to call out which category each tool seems to fit with. Place the sticky notes in that category, and instruct teens to copy down each tool on the board in the appropriate category in their journals. The teens will note that some tools may fit into more than one category. That's fine. Either make duplicate stickies and put the tools in several categories, or choose the category that fits best.
- Tell teens that as they copy down each tool, they should think about whether it's something they have found useful or might like to try.
- Finally, ask teens to turn to the Tools Cheat

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My Personal Tool Bank

Here are the same categories of tools from the Cheat Sheet on p. 115. In this Tool Bank, you are going to write down all the tools. You get to decide which ones you want to try out during the workshop. You can add new tools to the list at any time.

Seeking Information	Social Support	Reflection and Experimentation	Rituals and Ceremonies	Rewards and Recognition

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Sheet on p. 115 in their journals. Ask them to look at the tool examples in the boxes and pick a few that they might like to try. They should add the tools they'd like to try to their Personal Tool Bank page.

Note: If your group did not come up with any tools for one or more of the categories (or came up with very few tools for a particular category) make sure to highlight the tool examples for that category from the Cheat Sheet. Remind students that we all tend to rely on the same strategies, and that one thing they'll be doing in Part Two of this workshop is trying out some new and different strategies.

- Explain to teens that, in the next session, they will construct actual toolboxes, and will use them to store some of the tools that they want to try out in navigating their chosen transition. Tell them that they will have many opportunities to add tools to their toolboxes in the coming weeks.






- Assign homework: Tell teens that the toolbox they'll be making next week should be decorated in a way that reflects who they are. Encourage them to collect materials to personalize their toolboxes. In addition to magazine clippings and their own illustrations, suggest that they bring in favorite song lyrics, quotes, poems, etc., as well as personal mementos (photocopies or replicas are fine).

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Direct teens to the Closing Reflection section of their journals.

APPENDIX

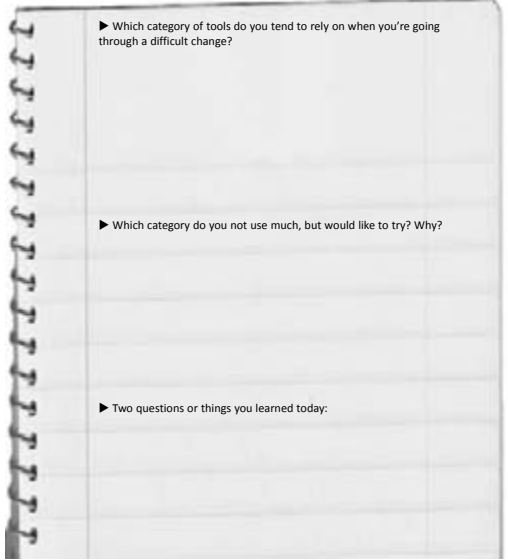
Transitions Tools Cheat Sheet

 Rituals and Ceremonies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening to music• Going to church• Volunteering regularly• Meditating• Praying• Doing your hair/makeup• Exercising• Painting or other creative activity• Reading about common rituals and ceremonies in different cultures and adapting one to your needs• Making up your own ceremony	 Seeking Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing for yourself to find out what you think/feel• Asking friends who have been through the same situation or others (teachers, sibling, social worker, minister, etc.) for feedback on the problem• Reading books related to the issue• Interviewing someone about the subject• Viewing reliable, trusted internet sites to find out more• Talking to a therapist/counselor
 Social Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talking to a therapist/counselor• Asking friends who have been through the same situation or others (teachers, sibling, social worker, minister, etc.) for feedback on the problem• Telling a trusted friend or adult that you need help and support• Participating in a group activity (club, team, etc. that makes you feel good)• Volunteering• Participating in a support group (like this one!)	 Reflection and Experimentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking/writing about the good things that could come out of your change• Thinking/writing about the situation from the perspective of someone else who is involved in the change• Figuring out ways to replace some of what you are losing and then trying out those ways• Trying to act differently than you normally would and finding out how that feels• Using a creative activity to express and think about your feelings (painting, drawing, composing music or poetry, etc.)
 Rewards and Recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A special meal or treat• A certificate of achievement• Buying something special• A celebration• Scheduling time for an activity you enjoy• A letter acknowledging what you've achieved (You can write it yourself or ask a close friend, teacher, or mentor to write one)	

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Closing Reflection



► Which category of tools do you tend to rely on when you're going through a difficult change?

► Which category do you not use much, but would like to try? Why?

► Two questions or things you learned today:

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