



CHALLENGE GROWTH

Letter From Your Future Self

Imagining the Future Challenges Growth Now

Description

Participants imagine their lives in the future and write a letter to themselves about what they can do in the present to work towards their hoped-for future self.

Objective

- Build and strengthen relationships among participants
- Build and strengthen relationships between participants and leaders
- Deepen understanding of the element of Challenge Growth

Connecting with the Framework

This activity challenges growth in participants by asking them to think about how their habits today connect to their future goals. Participants consider changes they may want to make to live up to their own expectations.

Planning and Preparation

 **Participants:** Any

 **Time:** 10 minutes

 **Materials:**

 **Set up:**

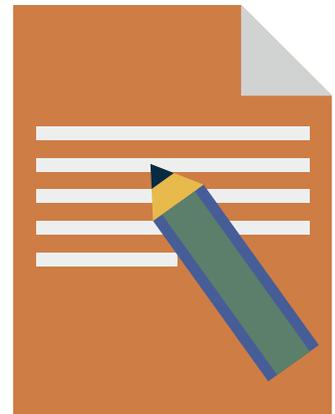
- Copies of “My Life Twenty Years From Now”
- Copies of “Letter From the Future”
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- This activity works best in a place where participants can write and reflect without distraction.

Facilitator Notes:

If your participants might have trouble with thinking from the perspective of themselves in the future, you can switch the activity so they are writing a letter to their future self instead of from their future self. This can help with younger participants who may find abstract thinking challenging.

Facilitator Instructions

1. If participants have been introduced to the Developmental Relationships Framework, let them know that through this activity we will be practicing the element of Challenge Growth. Remind them that challenging growth is about pushing ourselves to go farther than we thought we could while learning from mistakes and setbacks. Today we are going to challenge ourselves to think about our future goals and what we might start doing today to meet those goals.
2. Instruct participants to think about themselves 20 years from now and consider the following questions without saying anything or writing anything down. Pause for a few moments between each question to give participants time to imagine their answers.
 - a. Where are you living?
 - b. What is your family life like?
 - c. What do you do for fun?
 - d. What kind of job do you have?
 - e. Are you still in school or what kind of education have you completed?
 - f. What other kinds of activities are you involved in? (e.g. local government, faith communities, community centers, volunteering, sports, arts, music)
 - g. What are you doing to make your community or the world a better place?
3. After participants have briefly imagined answers to these questions, give them a copy of the “My Life Twenty Years From Now” handout. Ask each of them to complete it.
4. When all of the participants have completed the handout, bring the group back together to share some of the ideas they generated. Ask each of the questions on the handout and invite several participants to share their responses with the full group.



5. Let participants know that you are going to ask some questions to get them thinking about what kinds of things they can do to set themselves up for success in the future. Ask:
 - a. When you've encountered a challenge or a problem recently, how did you tackle it?
 - b. What habits do you have that help you get things done in life? (e.g., setting an alarm to get up, taking time to get homework done, asking for help, managing time well)
 - c. What habits do you have right now that get in the way of your goals? (e.g., procrastinating, doing things at the last minute, not asking for help when you don't understand something, etc.)
 - d. What does it look like when you're being your best self?
 - e. What changes in your habits might you want to challenge yourself to make in order to achieve your goals?
6. Now, tell the group that 20 years have passed in the blink of an eye. Give them the new date, which should be exactly 20 years from the date you do this activity. Let participants know that their future self can give them some really good advice! In order to achieve the goals you have set for your life in 20 years from now, what advice does your future self give you?
7. Distribute the "Letter From the Future" handout to each participant. Give them time to write the letter. Let them know that they will be sharing their letters in small groups.
8. When the participants have completed their letters, get participants into small groups and invite them to read their letters to each other. (If a participant does not want to read the whole letter, let them know they can share some of the main ideas with their group.) After each person has read their letter, the small group can ask questions and offer positive feedback. If participants have suggestions on how someone can achieve their goals, they might ask if the person is looking for ideas right now. If so, they may share it briefly. Or they may say something like, "If you want to talk about this more, I'd be glad to do that."

Reflect

Gather everyone back together and discuss these questions as a large group:

- Was it easy or hard to think about yourself in 20 years? Did you think of things you haven't thought about before?
- How do you think it helps to think about what you need to do in the next year or two in order to be who you want to be in 20 years?
- What if you don't know where you want to be in 20 years? How do you think about your life and your goals now? What are the steps you take now to help yourself prepare for a positive future, even when it's not clear what that future will be?
- What advice did others in your group give you? Are there any suggestions you will use?
- Who are the people who can help you stay on track to achieve your goals?

Taking Action (optional)

Ask participants to share their own letter with family and friends. Invite them to keep the letter in a special place to remind them of their goals and the things they wanted to challenge themselves to do today to achieve those goals.

Putting It Into Practice

If participants are willing to share, you could collect and make a copy of each of their worksheets. You can comment on each to reinforce the participants' goals and encourage them to act, think, and make decisions that help them achieve those goals. You can also Expand Possibilities by connecting them with resources or people who can help them as they work toward their goals.

My Life Twenty Years From Now

1. Where do you live?
2. Who is in your family?
3. What is your job?
4. What do you do for fun?
5. What kind of education or training did you complete after high school?
6. What other kinds of activities are you involved in? (e.g. local government, faith communities, community centers, volunteering, sports, arts, music, etc.)
7. What do you do to make your community or the world a better place?

Letter From the Future

Name _____

Use this page to write a letter from yourself twenty years from now to yourself today. In your letter, tell your younger self what you think you should do and what decisions you should start making in the next year in order to achieve your goals later in life. You will have the opportunity to share your letter in small groups and get feedback from them after you complete your letter.

Date: _____

Dear _____ (you today),

Sincerely,

_____ (you twenty years from now)