



Advisory: A Dynamic Approach—High School Overview & Sample Learning Experiences

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Adults in schools advise students in many ways, of course. By far the best known structure for that is the advisory group, or “advisory,” designed to be a small group of students meeting regularly with an adult who keeps a close eye on their social, emotional, and academic development.

Research suggests that schools that embrace advisory typically have specific aims, often overlapping. Beginning with the most frequently stated, these include:

- 1) Developing interpersonal relationships among staff and students
- 2) Providing academic support to students
- 3) Enriching the curriculum
- 4) Building a school culture

For our approach, the driver for advisory is supporting social and emotional learning—along with interpersonal relationships and transferable knowledge and skills—to the benefit of students personally and school-wide culture.

In practice, advisory programs take many forms, for example:

- a daily ten-minute check-in (akin to homeroom)
- a half-hour block once a week focused on, say, academic catch-up or college preparation
- a weekly 40-60 minutes of dedicated or “sacred” time to provide a safe place to explore topics and concerns that are not addressed elsewhere

This design, *Advisory: A Dynamic Approach*, is based on the 40-60 minute weekly “sacred time” model, however we have assisted schools with different timeframes and frequencies. We can also provide recommendations for additional advisory sessions.

The purpose of the program, aligned to the mission and vision of the school, as well as attending to the students’ well-being, shapes the design. “Let’s help kids be fabulous,” a faculty member said, wanting to bring out the best in students. “If we can do this, our school will be better, too.”

Core Elements

A robust advisory:

- Builds relationships peer-to-peer, teacher-to-student
- Provides opportunities for open and honest communication
- Strengthens health and wellbeing
- Develops awareness of social and emotional learning
- Reduces school and social pressures

- Supports academics through transferable knowledge and skills

For students, a successful advisory means:

- A safe space for interaction
- A teacher who knows me
- Trust that I speak with openness and honesty
- A group that appreciates and values me
- A greater understanding of my place in school, my family, with friends, and the world

For faculty, it means:

- At least one adult in the school is getting to know each student well
- Prosocial/healthy choices are being supported
- My work is valued by my peers and contributing value to the school as a whole

Our Approach

Designed to be a meaningful, sustaining *flexible* advisory program, content can be taught in its entirety or woven into an established or emerging program. We collaborate with your school to consider options and recommend an approach that truly fits your school's ambitions, mission, and seen as most appropriate to serve your school community.

For grades 9-11, the program covers four themes with special importance to high school students. They include:

Identity: The development of a strong and stable sense of self is widely considered to be one of the central tasks of adolescence. *Sample questions:* Who am I? What do I value? How do others see me? What are my strengths? What helps me be myself? How can I contribute to the group?

Learning to Learn: As students are immersed in school and classes where learning is the focus, stepping back to think more deeply about the business of learning illuminates the process, options, and purposes. *Sample questions:* How does asking questions deepen learning? How can I move from a fixed to a growth mindset? How can I become a more focused learner? How can I learn from mistakes?

Relationships: Relationships are often the most meaningful part of our lives. The intricate task of building and managing relationships, however, can be daunting, especially for adolescents. *Sample questions:* What makes friendships challenging as well as nurturing? What are things I can't tell my parents but wish I could? How do our choices affect others? What is gratitude and how can we cultivate it? How do I ask for what I need?

Well-being: There are so many elements to well-being, we are learning, however feeling healthy, confident, and happy still lie at its heart. Achieving a state of well-being, at any age, takes practice. *Sample questions:* What's unique about the teenage brain? How do "good" and

“bad” stress differ? What is mindfulness? How do our personal dispositions—like extroversion and introversion—affect how we think and act?

Each theme includes six 40-60 minute “learning experiences” —72 in all across grades 9-11. Their reach is huge: belonging, exploring change, mindful listening, asking questions, parents and trust, friendship, other people’s lives, thinking routines, the teenage brain, digital diets, reflection, stress and well-being, and more. The inclusion of two open advisories during each eight-week block offers time and space to expand on topics that especially garner students’ interest and energy, or to address current events that require attention.

We are always adding to this program. For example, students may have a topic they want to explore that is *not* covered in the Advisory sequence or design. We have developed a process for **We Want to Learn About** to be adaptable and encourage curiosity and student-directed inquiry. We are also developing content on additional aspects of identity, understanding assumptions and bias, and even more on meaningful conversations – which is already a hallmark of the program.

For seniors, we agreed that their circumstance required a different scope and structure. They participate in a **Senior Seminar** model with six themes, five sessions per theme; session four attendance is often optional to allow for much-needed flexibility. The themes include: Leaving a Legacy, Planning Our Path, Achieving Balance: Exercises in Well-Being, On Our Way, and Capturing Our Story. The process includes one session per theme where the entire class comes together for a speaker, panel, or other shared event, such as a “world café-type protocol” for conversations. The session on “Achieving Balance” differs; this is an immersive series of experiences.

Organizational Learning

Any new program is just that: *new*. Willingness for all to dive in and participate, especially advisors, models engagement students will notice and emulate. Questions raised present important opportunities to determine ways to continually refine the program so it remains “dynamic” and relevant.

Inquiries Welcome!

For information about pricing, customization and professional development, please contact:

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WHERE I'M FROM

Purpose

- To give voice to where we're from and who we are
- To deepen awareness of self and others—our commonalities and differences
- To acknowledge and celebrate diversity across the school community

Key Skills

- Self-awareness
- Self-expression
- Relating to others
- Celebrate similarities and differences

Materials

- ✓ Handout: "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon
- ✓ Organizer (optional): "I'm From" Idea Gathering Grid
- ✓ Extension: WKCD "Where I'm From" Poem Collection

Context

We are indelibly shaped by the people and places in our lives. When students creatively explore their origins, they gain a deepened sense of identity—where they're from, what they cherish, who they are. When students share these stories of identity (in this case through poetry or short essay) with peers, they discern the commonalities and differences in their lives. Their understanding of themselves grows as they understand others; they plant seeds of inclusion.

Note: This class is designed to extend into an open session.

Opening

- When asked "Where are you from?" what are your first thoughts?
- Weary of this question, poet George Ella Lyon (who lives in Kentucky, U.S.) decided to create her own where-I'm-from lists and then edited them into a poem. Hand out "Where I'm From" and read aloud to the class.
- Ask students:
 - What about this poem gives you the strongest feelings?
 - What is the most compelling image for you?
 - Is there anything you can relate to in it?
 - How do you think the author feels about where she is from?

Process

- Students draft their own "Where I'm From" poem or narrative. Rather than copy the order and form of Lyon's poem, encourage students to follow their own intuition in writing about the smells, sights, sounds, voices, people, and places they are from. George Ella Lyon writes: "Remember, you are the expert on you. No one else sees the world as you do; no one else has your material to draw on. You don't have to know where to begin. Just start. Let it flow. Trust the work to find its own form."
- Optional: To help students get started, hand out the "I'm From" Idea Gathering grid and allow approximately 5-10 minutes to fill it out. Then ask them to partner with another student and take turns sharing what they've jotted down. The remainder of the time is spent on

creating their work.

- Advise students that when they meet the following week, time can also be allotted for writing or revision. Then, you'd like them to take turns reading aloud what they have written—aware that it may not be polished.
- When students share their work at the following Open advisory, allow a few minutes for discussion after each reading. You might again ask: What about this poem gives you the strongest feelings? A compelling image? Is there anything you can relate to in it? How do you think the author feels about where she or he is from?

Closing

- Invite students to share two things gained from hearing each other's poem or narrative.
- How does this influence answering the question "Where are you from?"

Extensions

- Some students may want to continue working on their piece—a terrific outcome.
- Some students might be interested in reading winning "Where I'm From" poems from a competition sponsored by the U.S based What Kids Can Do. They are delightful and diverse.
- Some students might be interested in creating a print or online anthology of "Where I'm From" poems that includes submissions from students in other advisories.

Where I'm From

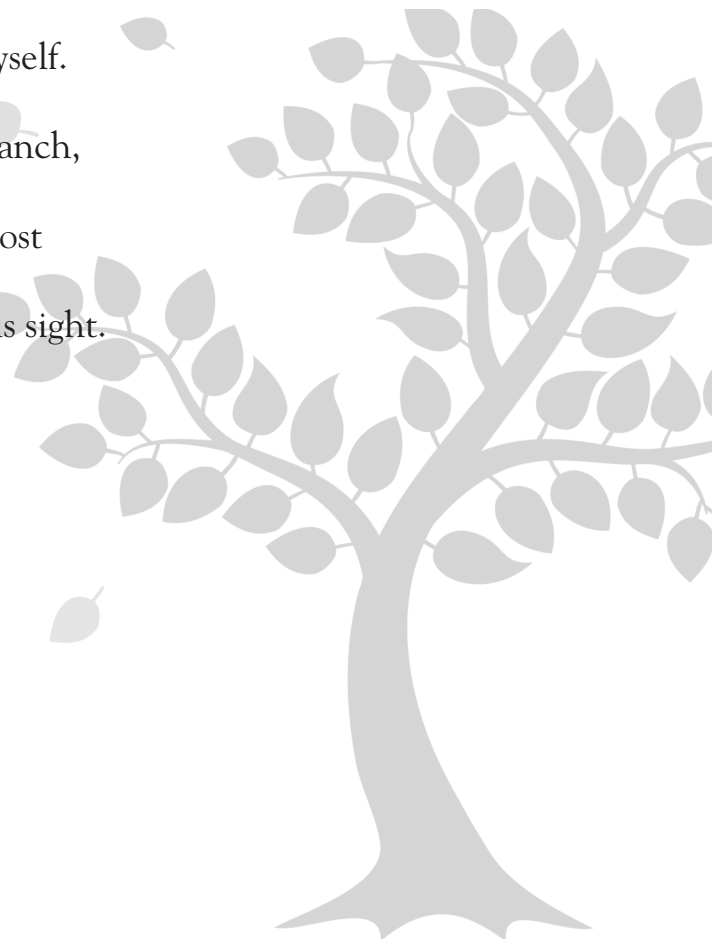
by George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments ~
snapped before I budded ~
leaf-fall from the family tree.



"I'm From" Idea Gathering Grid

"Remember, you are the expert on you. No one else sees the world as you do; no one else has your material to draw on. You don't have to know where to begin. Just start. Let it flow. Trust the work to find its own form." George Ella Lyon

Smells from your childhood

Places in your home and neighborhood

Close family members

Lands and places your family is from

Sayings in your family

Songs/stories your family sings/tells

Where you keep your memories

Tastes from your childhood

GROWTH MINDSET

Purpose

- To understand the concept of fixed vs. growth mindset
- To explore the ways each of us applies a fixed or growth mindset in our own lives, in and outside school
- To practice phrases we can say to ourselves that move us from a fixed to a growth mindset

Key Skills

- Critical thinking
- Self-direction
- Collaboration
- Extend ideas

Materials

- ✓ Easel paper; sticky notes
- ✓ Organizer: Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset
- ✓ Video: TEDxTalk by Eduardo Briceño, “The Power of Belief: Mindset and Success” (10:51 min) [available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc>]; two additional videos are referenced in Extensions as options or additional resources
- ✓ Extensions: Graphic on Fixed vs. Growth Mindset; article from MindsetWorks.com, “You Can Grow Your Intelligence: New Research Shows the Brain Can Be Developed Like a Muscle”

Context

The concept of “mindset” has gained increasing attention since Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck introduced it in her 2007 book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Those with a “fixed” mindset believe that people’s intelligence and abilities are static and outside their control – the widely accepted theory of cognitive development through the 1960s. In contrast, those with a “growth mindset” know that intelligence is dynamic. As neuroscience has now decisively shown, the brain does change based on one’s experiences and efforts.

Regardless of the research, we all develop beliefs about our own intelligence, beginning in childhood. Some children worry that they don’t have enough. Others grow up thinking they can do anything if they just work hard. Research shows these beliefs make a big difference in how children do in school. Even students who consider themselves “gifted” often avoid challenge, for fear they might lose status if they fail. When we teach youth that intelligence is malleable, they more readily take on challenges, persist through difficulties, and experience intellectual growth.

In this advisory, students learn about fixed vs. growth mindset and how it applies in their own lives, in and outside school. The two additional Extension videos, one with Dr. Dweck and one on neuroplasticity, are great resources.

Opening

- Hand out the Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset organizer. Ask students to list things they think they are not good at and things they are good at and, for each item, explain why (part one of the organizer). Then ask them to share their list and reasons with a partner. Allow ten minutes.

Process

- Show students the TEDxTalk by Eduardo Briceño (CEO of MindWorks), “The Power of Belief: Mindset and Success” (10:51 min)
- Debrief by asking: What stands out for you in what Briceño said? Were there surprises? Anything that challenges what you know – or thought you knew? What messages, emotions, or ideas will you take away from this video? Discuss for five minutes.
- Ask students to generate a shared definition of fixed vs. growth mindset, drawing upon the video.

Write on the board or easel paper *People with a fixed mindset believe . . .*. Have students write their answers on a sticky note. Do the same for *People with a growth mindset believe . . .*. Then invite students to place their sticky notes on the appropriate easel paper (on the wall) organizing them as they are placed. Ask students to congregare around these visuals and discuss what they see that are most common responses, what is unique, and what new ideas are generated.

- Finally, have students sit in groups of four and collaborate to complete the second part of the Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset organizer: “What Can I Say to Myself?” Model the process by asking: “Instead of saying, ‘I can’t make this better,’ what might you think to reflect a growth mindset? (E.g., ‘I can always improve, so I’ll keep at it.’) Instead of saying ‘I cannot do math,’ what can you tell yourself? (E.g., ‘I’m going to train my brain in math.’)”
- Give students five minutes to fill out the organizer, adding that it’s possible they won’t finish and that’s okay; what matters is exploring new options, thinking, and sharing ideas.
- Reconvene. Read each “instead of” and ask each group to share its “replace with.”

Closing

- Ask students to select one item on the list made earlier of things they aren’t good at, yet. The power of “yet” is a forward thinking consideration and leaves us open to future possibilities. Advise them that during the next several days, they should think about small steps they could take to improve this one particular item. They can share their strategies as a follow-up at the next advisory or during an Extension.

Extensions

- The closing offers one Extension.
- Interview an “expert” collectively in advisory or individually. If done individually, suggest students select someone really good at something they care about – another student, adult at school, family member, acquaintance in the community. Direct students to set up an informal 15-20 minute interview to ask about developing expertise, being sure to take good notes or record the interview on their smartphone. One possibility is setting up the interview between advisories or during advisory with phone or in-school appointments. Sample questions:
 - How did you first learn this skill?
 - What was hardest when you first started doing it?
 - What made you keep doing it even when it was hard?
 - What helped you get better at it?
 - Did anyone else help you with it? How?
 - Describe one time when you knew you were getting better at it. How did you know?
 - Once you started to get good at it, what made you want to get even better?
 - How long did it take before people started coming to you as an “expert”?Post-interview, discuss what was learned and could be applied to their own growth mindset.
- Two additional videos can be shown in advisory or referenced for further insight, particularly the presentation by Dr. Carol Dweck:
 - Carol Dweck, “Developing a Growth Mindset” [9:37] www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiiEeMN7vbQ \
 - Neuroplasticity, animation [2:03] www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCYZa87g

Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset

There is a difference between not knowing, and not knowing YET.

Sheila Tobias, author

What I am not good at . . .

And Why

What I am good at . . .

And Why

What can I say to myself?

Instead of saying . . .

Replace with . . .

I'm not good at this

I give up

This is too hard

I made a mistake

I will never be as smart as him/her

This is good enough

Add two more statements:

EMBRACING MISTAKES

Purpose

- To view mistakes as a valuable asset
- To explore what it takes to learn from a mistake
- To increase confidence in one's ability to fix a mistake

Key Skills

- Clarifying concepts
- Self-awareness
- Critical thinking
- Extending ideas

Materials

- ✓ Video: "Doctors make mistakes. Can we talk about that?" (14 min.)— excerpts from a TED Talk by physician Brian Goldman about how medicine's culture of denial (and shame) keeps doctors from ever talking about their mistakes, or using them to learn and improve:
<https://vimeo.com/174048220> (For full talk see:
https://www.ted.com/talks/brian_goldman_doctors_make_mistakes_can_we_talk_about_that?language=en)
- ✓ Easel paper with diagram from Advisor Page Embracing Mistakes: How Do You View Your Mistakes?
- ✓ Organizer: "Deconstructing Mistakes"
- ✓ Handout: "Embracing Mistakes"

Context

It's a cliché to say we learn from our mistakes. Indeed, it seems like everywhere we turn we're being told to "embrace failure." From social media to countless business books and articles and the global failure conference FailCon, the importance of mistakes is lauded as a key stepping-stone for success. Current education research reaches the same conclusion: Academic success comes from how students feel about their mistakes as well as from how "smart" or motivated they are. Embracing mistakes is integral to the notion of growth mindset.

In practice, few of us—whether we're a corporate CEO or a high school student—see our mistakes as a valuable asset. We don't think about them rationally; we think about them emotionally. Mistakes make us feel stupid and ashamed, and our natural response to feeling ashamed is to avoid its source. If we say something embarrassing, we hide our face. If we get a bad grade, we hide the test away. Maybe we pledge to ourselves that we're going to work harder than ever, to make being perfect or near perfect our goal.

In this advisory, students will take a short but deep dive into the dynamics of embracing mistakes and what it takes to learn from them.

Opening

- Ask students: What was the most helpful mistake you made this week? Give them a moment to think, then go around the room and record their answers. Follow up by asking why the mistake was helpful.
- Now ask why it's so hard to admit making a mistake.
- Explain that in this advisory, students will first watch a popular TED Talk by an emergency room doctor about his own mistakes with patients, the inevitability of mistakes in medicine, and the shame that surrounds them. Next students will "deconstruct" a mistake in their own lives that left an impact. Finally, they will do a quick self-check on the optimism with which they view their ability to fix their mistakes.

Process

TED Talk (20 minutes)

- Have students watch the Brian Goldman video (<https://vimeo.com/174048220>).
- Debrief: What makes Goldman's speech so compelling?
- Discussion: Explain that in the last five minutes of his talk, Goldman describes how "the system" in medicine strongly discourages physicians from admitting mistakes, talking about them and getting help, and using mistakes as an opportunity to improve or learn from each other. Ask students if they see any parallels with school and, if so, what are they?

Deconstructing Mistakes (10 minutes)

- Explain that as much as admitting a mistake can be hard, it's also a challenge to *learn* from our mistakes, despite the fancy rhetoric. The first and most essential step to learning from a mistake is to analyze what really happened. Only then can we consider what we might have done differently.
- Have students break into groups of three. Hand out the "Deconstructing Mistakes" organizer. Give students 3-5 minutes to complete it on their own.
- Now ask students to take turns sharing what they wrote with others in their group. Encourage students to ask each other clarifying questions. Allow 3-5 minutes for sharing.
- Debrief: Ask students what they learned from the exercise and how they might apply it in their own lives.

Closing

- Put up on easel paper (or draw on the board) the diagram "How do you view your mistakes?" Have students do a One Minute Think Tank on what would help them have more confidence in their ability to fix mistakes and then share the results with the whole class.
- Hand out "Embracing Mistakes"; if time permits have students select a quote or image that seems to stick.

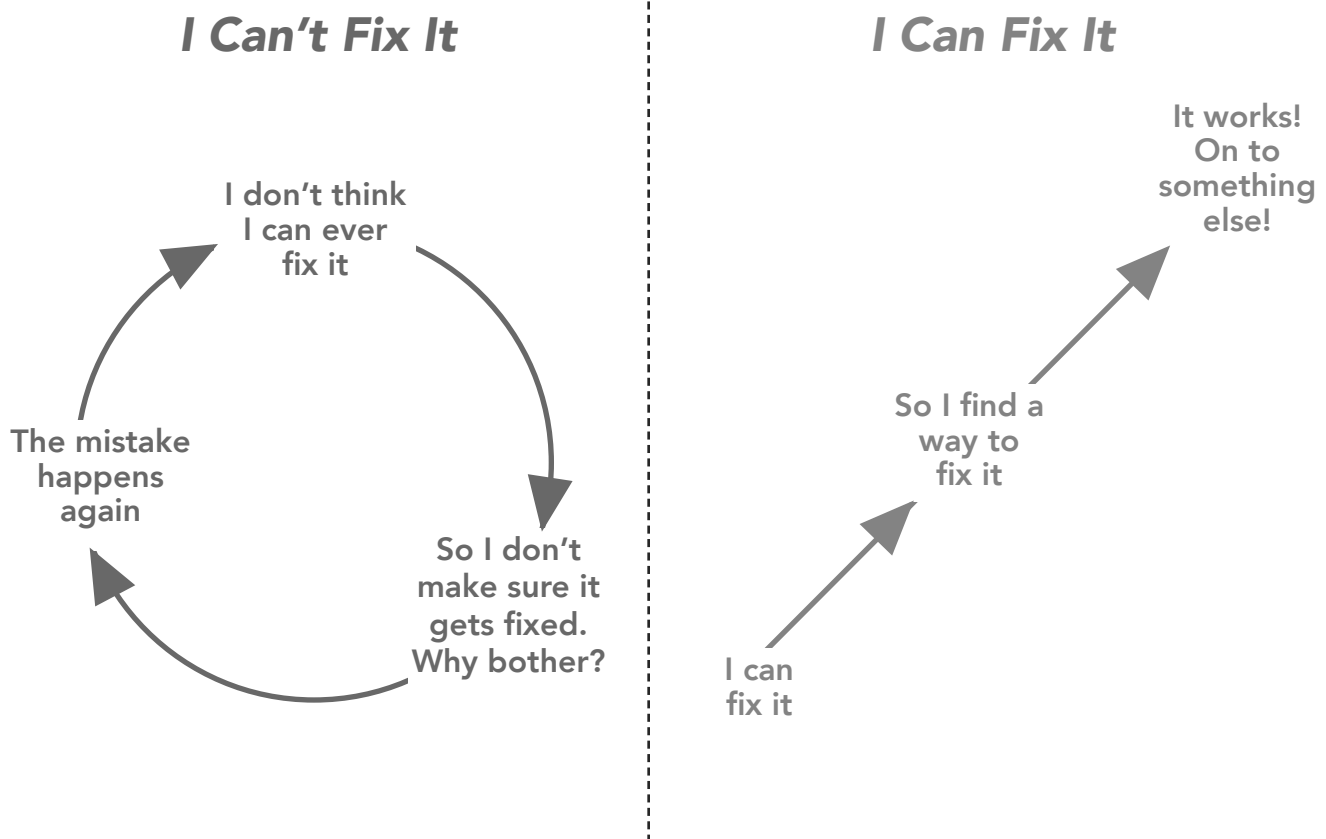
Extension

- Encourage students to interview their parents about mistakes they've made in their lives and what they learned from them. Students might begin by talking about the most helpful mistake they made in the past week or two.

Embracing Mistakes Diagram

Copy onto a piece of easel paper:

How Do You View Your Mistakes?



Credit: Hunter Maats and Katie O'Brien (from "Teaching Students to Embrace Mistakes," Edutopia, March 20, 2014 <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-students-to-embrace-mistakes-hunter-maats-katie-obrien>)

Deconstructing a Mistake

What was going through your mind or around you when you made the mistake?

**Did you ask for help before making the mistake? If yes, what was the result?
If not, why not?**

**Did you realize right away that you'd made the mistake? If not, when/how did
you find out?**

How did you feel when you recognized the mistake?

What thoughts were going through your mind?

**Did you think another person—or circumstances beyond your control—contributed
to the mistake?**

What did you do next?

Looking back, what lessons do you take away from the experience?

What would you do differently if you had it to do over again?

Embracing Misteaks

SUCCESS

What people
think it looks like

SUCCESS

What it really
looks like

Oops!

A mistake is simply another way of doing things.

Katharine Graham, publisher

If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes.

John Wooden, basketball player and coach

Mistakes are information.

Barbara Conable,
Alexander Technique teacher

A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.

Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist

Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes.

Mahatma Gandhi, statesman

I make mistakes like the next man. In fact, being--forgive me--rather cleverer than most men, my mistakes tend to be correspondingly huger.

J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

Have no fear of perfection - you'll never reach it.

Salvador Dalí, artist

STORIES AND STEREOTYPES

Purpose

- To imagine the single stories we might tell—or might be told by others—about ourselves
- To consider ways we can transcend our perceptions in relation to other people’s “single stories”
- To explore how a “single story” can perpetuate stereotypes

Key Skills

- Mindful listening
- Observation
- Self-awareness
- Extending ideas

Materials

- ✓ Index cards and pens
- ✓ Video: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on "The Danger of a Single Story" (18:42 min):
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

Context

We are all guilty of perpetuating stereotypes that create a single story, whether we intend to or not. “Show people as one thing over and over again, and that’s what they become,” says Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

In her now famous TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story,” Adichie warns that the problem with stereotypes is not that they “are untrue, but that they are incomplete.” Adichie reminds us that we must not only seek diverse points of view, we must also tell our own stories, ones that are true to our own personal experiences. “Stories matter. Many stories matter,” says Adichie.

“Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

In this advisory, students watch Adichie’s cautionary yet inspirational TED Talk about stereotypes and storytelling, then explore its meaning in their own lives.

Opening

- Write on the board the word: *story*. Ask students to free associate to the word and record what they say. You might add some prompts: e.g. Who are in stories? Why do stories exist? How do you know what you are reading/writing/listening to is fact or fiction?
- Now ask: What is the danger of a *single* story? Students probably won’t have an answer to this question before watching Adichie’s TED Talk—and that’s fine.

Process

- Show the video, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on "The Danger of a Single Story" (18:42 min); URL noted above.
- When the video ends, have students break into four groups and generate two or three central ideas from Adichie’s talk. Allow 2-3 minutes, then reconvene and have each group share their ideas, then discuss.
- Write the following quote from Adichie on the board: “*The single story creates stereotypes...and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.*”

- Have students make a list, on an index card, of the potential “single stories” that people may have created or *could* create about *them*. Ask students to partner with another student, pick a story on their list, and take turns interviewing each other to add detail to their story. Allow 2-3 minutes.
- Reconvene and invite two or three students to share their story (that is not a single story).

Closing

- Close by asking:
 - How and why do we project single stories on others?
 - How do our emotions shift when we realize there is more than a single story?
 - How can we transcend our perceptions in relation to other peoples’ single stories?

Extensions

- Invite students to look for examples of “a single story” during the week. This could come up in a class discussion, with a news story, or in a dinner table conversation. Use these examples in an Open Session to further heighten awareness, and to consider what can be done in these situations to learn more, or invite others to join in deeper understanding through expanding or completing a story.
- Use an Open Session to develop one of their personal single stories noted on the index card into a more complete narrative. This could grow into, if desired, a publication with contributions from students in several, if not all, advisories. For example, for each contributor, an initial page could have the single story, then turn the page for either a personal narrative or an interview that draws out the narrative.

THE TEENAGE BRAIN

Purpose

- To learn about the teenage brain and how it is different from the adult brain
- To understand how the teenage brain contributes to behaviors associated with adolescence, like risk-taking
- To consider how society might respond to the research indicating that teenage brains are still maturing

Key Skills

- Active listening
- Asking questions
- Analytical thinking
- Collaboration

Materials

- ✓ Video: “The Teenage Brain Explained” (10:00 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiduiTq1ei8>; internet connection and screen
- ✓ Handout: “Four Facts about the Teenage Brain”
- ✓ Index cards; easel paper; markers

Context

Scientists used to think that a teenage brain was just an adult brain with fewer miles. While 95 percent of the human brain has developed by the age of six, current neuroscience researchers report that the greatest spurt of growth after infancy occurs around adolescence.

It will come as no surprise that the adolescent brain is often described as “still immature” or “maturing.” These are kind labels for not-so-kind behaviors: mood swings, surliness, impulsivity, poor decisions, insensitivity (or too much sensitivity), and more. Parents and teachers wish that lectures, rewards, and punishments would turn these difficult behaviors around. Neuroscience research explains why they persist. We are also reminded of the enormous positive possibilities of the teenage brain, with its plasticity and inventiveness.

In this advisory, students will have a brief introduction to the teenage brain and how it differs from the adult brain. They will then consider what society might do to respond to research that shows teenage brains are still maturing.

Suggested times are noted for each section in this lively advisory!

Opening (5 minutes)

- Ask students what they know about the teenage brain. Record their answers on the board.
- In this advisory, they will undertake a crash course on the teenage brain and its influence on teenage development and behavior.

Process

Video and Response (15 minutes)

- Distribute the index cards. Show students the ten-minute video, “The Teenage Brain Explained” (URL noted above). The video begins with a discussion of the hormonal and physiological changes that come with adolescence before moving on to the brain. Ask students to jot down at least five key points on their index cards while watching the video.
- Ask if there are any questions about what they heard or saw in the video. Write down all the questions. Only respond to those that can be answered with information from the video; label the others with a “C” for “curiosity,” what we now want to know about. For the questions related to the video, see if any students can provide an answer before stepping in with your own. Do not yet answer the “C” questions.

Facts about the Teenage Brain (15 minutes)

- Have students divide into four groups, with easel paper and markers. Ask them to draw a picture of a teenage brain at the center of the paper and then, on the left, to list specifics of what they now know about the teenage brain and, on the right, things they're curious about (you can reference what they have already asked – the questions marked with a "C"). Allow 3-4 minutes. Have students post their papers on the wall and give them a minute to see what other groups wrote.
- Have students return to their groups and hand out "Four Facts about the Teenage Brain." Tell students that for five minutes, their task will be to review brain facts for one of the following four categories: 1) Intense emotions, 2) Measuring risk; 3) Stress; and 4) I am the center of the universe – and this universe is not good enough! Ask: Who wants which topic? and they will quickly select (or receive one by default). For five minutes they are to:
 - gather more information about the fact (if desired)
 - prepare a presentation on this topic that includes at least two unfamiliar terms
 - involve everyone in their group in the presentation in some way
 - engage everyone in the advisory in some way
 - make their presentation such that it will be remembered forever!
 - easel paper and markers are optional and available to use.Allow a total of five minutes.
- Reconvene and have groups share their presentations. Did the presentations answer any of the "C" questions or other curiosities they had on their easel paper? The deeper dive into their questions can occur in an Open advisory.

Closing (5 minutes)

- Ask: In light of these emerging facts about the teenage brain and brain imaging research, are there ways society should rethink societal rules and responsibilities for this age group? Are there implications for, say, teen drivers' licensing laws, alcohol-related laws, or the amount of freedom parents give teens at certain ages (or the time high school should start, given the research that says it's natural for teens to go to bed and wake up late)?

Note: Five minutes is clearly not enough time to explore all of these ideas. This can extend into an Open advisory, if the students show interest.

Extensions

- Several suggestions for Open Sessions are presented in the descriptors of this advisory.
- If students want to learn more about the adolescent brain, here are some links to neuroscientists talking about the teenage brain that are reasonably accessible to high school students:
 - "The Teen Brain: It's Just Not Grown Up Yet," interview with cognitive neuroscientist Frances Jensen, National Public Radio (5:10 min):
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124119468>
 - "The Mysterious Workings of the Adolescent Brain," TED Talk by neuroscientist Sarah Jayne Blakemore (14:26 min):
https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_jayne_blakemore_the_mysterious_workings_of_the_adolescent_brain?language=en
 - "What We're Learning about the Teenage Brain," The Takeaway/Public Radio International (7:48 min):
<http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-08-06/what-were-learning-about-teenage-brain>

Four Facts about the Teenage Brain



FACT 1: Intense emotions

Puberty is the beginning of major changes in the limbic system, referring to the part of the brain that not only helps regulate heart rate and blood sugar levels, but also is critical to the formation of memories and emotions.

Part of the limbic system, the **amygdala** is thought to connect sensory information to emotional responses. Its development, along with hormonal changes, may give rise to newly intense experiences of rage, fear, aggression (including towards oneself), excitement and sexual attraction.

Over the course of adolescence, the limbic system comes under greater control of the prefrontal cortex, the area just behind the forehead, which is associated with planning, impulse control, and higher order thought.

As additional areas of the brain start to help process emotion, older teens gain some equilibrium and have an easier time interpreting others. But until then, they often misread teachers and parents.

FACT 2: Measuring risk

“The brakes come online somewhat later than the accelerator of the brain,” said neuroscientists Sara Johnson, referring to the development of the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system respectively. At the same time, teens need higher doses of risk to feel the same amount of rush adults do.

Teenage brains are simply wired to seek reward, research suggests. When teens got money, or anticipated receiving some, the part of their brain that deals with pleasure and reward, the **ventral striatum**, lit up more than in adults in the study.

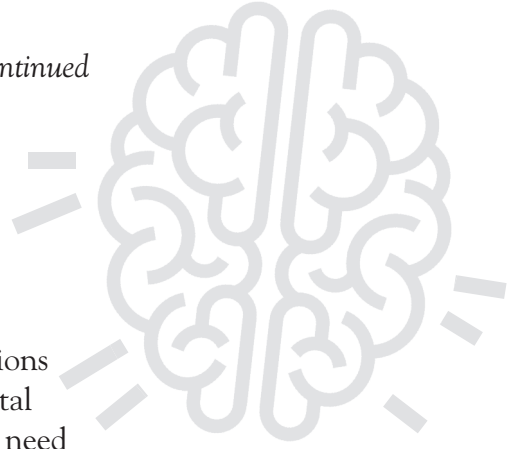
All this may make teens vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviors, such as trying drugs, getting into fights or jumping into unsafe water. By late adolescence, say 17 years old and after, the part of the brain responsible for impulse control and long-term perspective taking is thought to help them reign in some of the behavior they were tempted by in middle adolescence.

FACT 3: Stress

The adolescent brain is also more vulnerable to stress. Our bodies regulate stress through a system called the HPA (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenalin) axis. The stress hormones, notably **cortisol** and **noradrenaline**, that flood our brain and body when faced with an acute physical emergency were once key to our survival, and fired only occasionally.

Chronic stress—from perceived as much as real threats—keeps the HPA switch mostly “on,” and the long-lasting effects can be toxic to our physical, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. It is not the stress itself that is harmful but the body’s reaction to the stress.

Four Facts about the Teenage Brain *continued*



In a recent survey of American teenagers, 43 percent of 13- to -14 year-olds said they felt stressed every single day. By ages 15 to 17, the number rose to 59 percent. The negative impact of stress hormones on the brain could not come at a worse time. Stress overloads the prefrontal cortex, making it harder to regulate emotions and thoughts. At the same time that teenagers—and their prefrontal cortex—are struggling to gain the self-control and regulation they need to stay on track, stress sends them in the opposite direction.

FACT 4: I am the center of the universe— and this universe is not good enough!

The hormone changes at puberty have huge effects on the brain, one of which is to spur the production of more receptors for oxytocin.

While **oxytocin** is often described as the “bonding hormone,” increased sensitivity to its effects in the limbic system has also been linked to feeling self-consciousness, making an adolescent truly feel like everyone is watching him or her. These feelings appear to peak around 15 years old.

While this may make a teen seem self-centered (and in their defense, they do have a lot going on), the changes in the teen brain may also spur some of the more idealistic efforts tackled by young people throughout history.

“It is the first time they are seeing themselves in the world,” neuroscientist Johnson said, meaning their greater autonomy has opened their eyes to what lies beyond their families and schools. They are asking themselves, for perhaps the first time: What kind of person do I want to be and what type of place do I want the world to be?

Adapted from <http://www.livescience.com/13850-10-facts-parent-teen-brain.html>

THREE QUESTION CONVERSATIONS

Purpose

- To engage in conversations with open-mindedness and mutual respect
- To listen for key words, ideas, and concepts
- To examine opinions and feelings on diverse topics and see the connections

Key Skills

- Listening
- Conversation
- Self-awareness
- Extending ideas

Materials

- ✓ Easel paper for each table, markers for each student

Context

Shared conversations are a critical component in learning, as is opening our minds to new ideas and perspectives. The process offered here creates an opportunity for both. It is based on the World Café, a model for meaningful conversations.

While there are numerous variations for the Café, it typically involves people sitting at tables of four with an easel paper page for the group to share and a marker for each person. The facilitator introduces a series of questions for conversation, with people noting in words and images key thoughts, ideas, questions, even doodles (anything really) on the paper. At a moment determined by the facilitator(s), the group stands—except one person who remains seated at each table and becomes the anchor. The “standers” move to different tables, forming new groups of four. The “anchor” begins by summarizing the previous table conversation and then the newcomers add to the topic. Sometimes the facilitator poses additional questions for continued dialogue. There can be several rounds of different length. (More on this process can be found at www.theworldcafe.com.)

Here, we follow the same protocol except that each table takes up a different question (three in all) and students move through the questions, expanding the conversation with each table change. (If there are four tables, two tables can take up the same question.)

Ideally, students begin to make or see connections among the different topics. In our choices for questions, we are looking at topics that may not frequently discuss but are important for adolescents to explore. Questions are always meant to be open to interpretation, and the conversation may go in many different directions. Once students have done this experience, they typically enjoy doing it again. Students may want to contribute their own ideas for questions.

Opening

If possible, have the room set up with seating arrangements—with easel paper and markers for four—prior to the students arriving so that they enter and take seats. Otherwise, have students assist you in transforming the space.

- Four students sit in each table arrangement. If needed, tables may have five.
- Explain that today is a World Café process for meaningful conversations. This World Café process has been used around the world by groups of all sizes, even 2000 people at a time, to discuss challenging topics, build consensus, set agendas, and create community. Explain that they will understand the process as they go through the process. However, there are several key guidelines:
 - Shared time
 - Everyone is responsible for including everyone
 - All ideas and comments are welcome

- The paper is used to capture words and images (and doodles)
- Respect for all
- Let students know that you will provide the topics for conversation in the form of questions.

Process

- Have each table take a number: 1, 2, 3 (if there are more than three tables, duplicate numbers) and show (on easel paper or a slide) the question that goes with each number, reading it aloud.
- Remind students to capture what is important and significant on the paper.
- Begin! As you monitor the process and the time, alert students when they have about a minute to wrap up their conversations. The time for the conversations vary, and may be as short as 5 minutes or as long as 10.
- Ask one person at each table to stand. The first time, students are often hesitant to stand, thinking that this person has to make a presentation. Instead, have this person then SIT and the other students scatter to different tables. The sitter, as noted previously, becomes an “anchor.”
- At their new tables, the “anchor” provides an overview of what was discussed. And the discussion continues.
- As you circulate to observe, notice whether the conversation includes how the topics from the different tables are connected. This is not required. However, if they are not making this connection, it may be stimulating at some point to ask something like, “Are you finding a connection with the topics you brought to the table?”
- Repeat changing tables. One person remains, the rest move, the conversation continues.

Closing

- Debrief by asking questions regarding the process:
 - What was the process like?
 - Was there anything particularly challenging, engaging, or surprising in the process?
- Include questions about the content:
 - What did you learn?
 - What did you discover that was unexpected?
 - What might you think about as a result of this experience?
- Reaffirm that community growth and change occurs by people talking to each other, with one conversation leading to another. Share the World Café website if students want to learn more.

Extensions

- Plan an experience with Three Conversations to lead with students and parents together.
- Deconstruct the experience with students, to look at the way the questions are constructed. Show them the set of five conversations (on the next page) and discuss what they notice. Could they create their own set in a similar fashion?

On the next page, five sets of Three Questions Conversations are provided.

Conversation Questions

Set One

1. **Why can it be so hard to say, "I'm sorry?"** (Can you remember a time in your own life when you did something wrong or hurt someone but just couldn't apologize?)
2. **How can you tell if a person is smart?** (What makes someone smart?)
3. **What happens to your body and your emotions when you feel really stressed?** (What do others see or not see?)

Set Two

1. **Why can it be easy to get caught up in rumors?** (Can you remember a time in your own life when a rumor seemed to spread on its own?)
2. **How can you show respect to others?** (What does respect really look like?)
3. **What happens to your body and your emotions when you are uncertain about making a choice?** (What do others see or not see?)

Set Three

1. **Why is saying "no" difficult sometimes?** (Can you remember a time when you wanted to say "no" but didn't?)
2. **How does peer pressure effect you and others?** (What makes it hard or easy to avoid peers pressure?)
3. **What happens to your body and your emotions when you feel really good about yourself?** (What do others see or not see?)

Set Four

1. **Why does judging others seem so normal?** (Is being judgmental avoidable?)
2. **How does being different shape our identity?** (Are we defined by what we have in common or what makes us unique?)
3. **What happens to your body and your emotions when you see others being treated as "less"?** (How are people treated fairly or unfairly all the time, all around us?)

Set Five

1. **Why do people see things differently from each other?** (Can you remember a time when you were surprised by someone else's point of view?)
2. **How can you tell if a person is your friend?** (Is friendship expressed the same for everyone?)
3. **What happens to your body and your emotions when you are involved in a conflict?** (What do others see or not see?)