

Mask Making

Use this activity to help youth actively engage in expressing their identity as a dimension of their **Ways I Am**. This is an art activity involving decorating the inside and outside of masks with guided instructions. The goal is to have participants do a self-assessment of who they are and how they show up to others. This activity was contributed by the Youth Leadership Initiative, a program in the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Why This Matters

- This activity facilitates self-awareness as youth think deeply about how they express themselves.
- Youth will practice active listening and understanding of another youth.

Getting Started

- Materials: Masks (can be purchased in bulk from art store), Paints, paint brushes, markers, magazine and newspaper, hot glue gun, beads, ribbons, flip chart paper, Mod Podge
- Total time: 2-3 hours
- Activity will need to be done in two sessions to allow paint to dry. Partners cannot be in the same room at the same time – it should be a surprise.
- Either set up two art rooms or plan a separate activity for one set of youth to do while their partners are making their masks.
- Consider in advance how you will help youth structure their partner interviews so that the time is meaningful.

How to Do It

- 1) Assign each youth a partner and give them each a mask.
- 2) Have the youth interview their partner. Tell youth to talk about their interests, strengths, passions, talents, qualities, what's important to them. Remind youth to practice active listening since they will be making a mask that shows who their partner is and what matters to them.
- 3) Based on what they have heard, one partner should decorate the outside of their partner's mask. Emphasize to the youth that there is no right or wrong answer and they should do the best they can based on the information heard. Partners should have space to decorate the masks away from each other. If there is not enough space to accommodate this, plan a separate activity that can be completed by the non-mask making partner.
 - a. Direct participants to paint the outside of the mask
 - b. Caution against too much paint saturation because the masks have to dry while the cutting of magazines is being done.
 - c. Use other decorative materials to decorate the outside of the mask.
- 4) When everyone is done, have youth switch masks with their partner. Remind youth that they should not discuss their masks with their partner at this point. They will be discussing the masks after they have painted the inside.
- 5) Youth should then finish their own mask on the inside. They should have space away from their partner and others so they can work independently.
 - a. Have youth decorate the inside of the mask and think about the following questions: Who are you on the inside? What don't people easily see about you? What are parts of your personality or person you don't show often?
 - b. Cover with Mod Podge to make it shiny.

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- 6) Bring the full group together to share masks. Youth should explain their mask, how someone perceived them, and how that is similar or different from who they really are.
- 7) Have partners pair up and share with each other why they painted the mask the way they did.
- 8) Debrief experience with guided questions. Some potential questions are:
 - What did you learn about how you reveal yourself to others?
 - If your inside self and outside self are not aligned, why not? What happens when there is a misalignment? How do you feel about this?
 - What holds us back from fully being our true self out in the world?
 - What would it take in order to align or integrate our inside with our outside selves?
 - Why might this be important to how others see and interact with us?
 - How might doing this or not doing this impact how we lead?

Take It Further

- Bring this mask back at the end of the year for another art project to see how much you have grown over the year. Now, individuals can paint who they want to be or express themselves externally. This would be about claiming your own authenticity, growth in self-knowledge, and how they want to relate to others.
- This activity could also be done with adults as part of a staff training or staff development.