

Losing Your Sense of Self

Post-It Note Activity

Required items: each person needs three small sheets of paper (we find Post-It notes easiest) and something to write with.

Before you begin: think about physical items that have the greatest meaning to you. It could be photo albums, a piece of jewelry, a guitar, etc. Write down three items, putting one on each sheet of paper.

If you're doing this activity with a group, you can ask what types of things people wrote down just to get a general idea of what they hold dear. *Remember: you cannot put down the names of children, money, credit cards, or pets. It has to be a physical item that has sentimental value.*

Introduction: through this activity, you are going to put yourself in the shoes of a young person facing homelessness before they arrive at Covenant House.

Imagine that you can no longer live in your home, and it happened very quickly. Many of the young people at Covenant House are fleeing violent situations and have to get out fast. You have to gather as many belongings as you can in a hurry, and you can't take everything with you.

Please pick one of the three items you wrote down to leave behind. Crumple up the Post-It and put it aside.

If you're with a group, take a few minutes to ask people what they lost and how they would feel about losing that item.

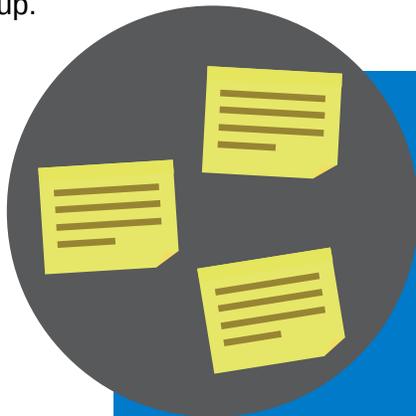
When you leave your house, you don't immediately have a safe place to go. You bounce around to a few friends' houses, but you don't want to overstay your welcome and you don't have the funds for a hotel room. You find yourself sleeping outside, and the weather takes a turn for the worst. During a rainstorm, one of your items is ruined.

Pick up your two remaining Post-its and crumple up the one in your left hand. That item has been lost in the storm.

If you're with a group, take another few minutes here for discussion.

You finally make your way to an adult shelter. You're scared, as you have heard that it can be dangerous, and you are surrounded by people of all ages who you don't know. As you finally get to sleep that night, your final item is stolen.

Please take your final Post-It and crumple it up.



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Reflection

Discussion:

Many youth who experience homelessness do so as a result of a traumatic event, either being forced out of their parent's house, foster care ending, or a violent situation. How do you think they manage not only without basic necessities, but without the possessions that are most meaningful to them?

How did it feel to lose the items that were most significant to you?

Homelessness is not just about losing a roof over your head. It's about losing pieces of your identity. The items you selected are probably items that in many ways show what you value and what makes you who you are. Thinking of it in this way, how would you describe what you lost and its impact?

This is where young people are when they first walk through the doors of Covenant House. And that's why it's so important that Covenant House offers more than just a safe place to sleep. We offer young people space to rediscover their self-worth and work towards their dreams, so they can move forward and realize the great promise of their lives.

