



Vital Questions
Vital Stories
Vital Learning
Vital Service



Youth Leaders in Service

***Transforming Community
With Youth-Focused, Strength-Based Projects***

(Write Your Name Here) 's

Personal Journal

*A program of Hopa Mountain, in cooperation with
the Corporation for National and Community Service*

My Personal Journal

Young people are uniquely equipped to change the world because you dream. You choose not to accept what is, but to imagine what might be.

I encourage you to dream, to care, to be compassionate, and to let yourselves soar with your ability to create positive change in a world that desperately needs you. Your time is now! ~Desmond Tutu, South African leader

How to Use This Personal Journal

This Personal Journal has prompts for stories, questions, imagination, conversations and actions. Jot a few words or drawings here and there, using your Personal Journal as a companion for reflection now and when you return home.

Vital Questions

People and communities grow in the direction of what they ask about. Every time we ask a question, we invite a possible new version of life.

—**Bliss Browne**, *Imagine: A Conversation with the Future*

Youth Leaders in Service offers an opportunity to join with others to improve your community through youth led actions -- and to learn with and from others as you do so.

As you think about creating positive change, what questions do you have? What do you see as your community's strengths and struggles? What would you like to understand better than you do now? What sort of difference would you love to be able to make?

What is one question you would love to explore with others in your community?

Vital Stories

The stories we believe are critical; how we see the world shapes how we act. Sharing our hopes and stories, we stretch each other's imaginations and offer an invitation to see life in a new and richer way. —Bliss Browne, Imagine Chicago

What stories and experiences of people working together to make a difference have inspired you, given you hope that positive change is possible?

What stories have you heard about people standing up for a cause even though it wasn't easy?

Moving Forward

Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, remembers especially about Martin Luther King, Jr.:

[He was] someone able to admit how often he was afraid and unsure about his next step. . . It was his human vulnerability and his ability to rise above it that I most remember. He didn't pretend to be a great powerful know-it-all. I remember him discussing openly his gloom, depression, his fears, admitting that he didn't know what the next step was. He would then say: 'Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just the first step.'

—Quoted in *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time* by Paul Rogat Loeb

Think back to a time in your life when you really wanted to make a change for the better in yourself or your community and took the first step even though you couldn't "see the whole staircase." Jot a few notes about it here.

What prompted you to act?

What gave you strength to move forward?

How might sharing your story inspire others?

Valuing Resources – A Treasure Hunt

“Every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given. If they are, the person will be valued, feel powerful and well-connected to the people around them. And the community around the person will be more powerful because of the contribution the person is making. Each time a person uses his or her capacity, the community is stronger and the person more powerful. That is why strong communities are basically places where the capacities of local residents are identified, valued and used. Weak communities are places that fail, for whatever reason, to mobilize the skills, capacities and talents of their residents or members.”

~Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*

What special talent or interest do you have—something you are good at, care about deeply, that expressing gives you a sense of joy and purpose?

Who has helped you discover and develop that “spark” and talent?

What are some of the ways your talent, passion, spark might help build your community?

Who are some of the people and organizations in your community you most admire?

List some of the strengths you’ve noticed about them and how they are being put to good use...

Imagining Transformation

We have to be part of something larger than ourselves because our dreams are often bigger than our lifetimes.

—**Sister Rosalie Bertell**. Quoted in *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*. Paul Rogat Loeb

Healthy communities do not just happen. The quality of a community is determined by choices people make over many generations. The choices made by our grandparents still shape our families and the communities in which we live. Though the impact of our choices may not be fully evident for years, our choices will shape the communities in which our grandchildren will live,

Imagine what life in your community will be like in the year 2100. Many things are possible between now and then.

What do you foresee?

What would you most like to be true of this community then?

What are you doing today to ensure that your community will be worth living in by 2110?

Choosing Hope

*You can't stumble into happiness like you fall into despair;
She's a deliberate destination, and she wants to see us all there.*

~Claudia Schmidt, *Here Comes Joy*

Every day we encounter injustices which break our hearts and cynicism which discourages us from believing new things are possible.

Who and what in your life help you to stay hopeful?

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*To live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us,
is itself a marvelous victory.* ~Howard Zinn

What images of hope have authority in you, things you have seen with your own eyes, things you believe in, that give you courage and confidence that people working together can really make a difference?

How is your hope evident to others?

Transforming Hope Into Action

Imagination is the domain of freedom. Imagine a just future where life flourishes for everyone. Imagine yourself as an active co-creator of such a world.

Describe your dream world in detail and how it is different from the way things are now:
My Dream is for...

What do you see happening already that suggests to you that these changes are possible, that your dream could come alive?

What are three actions you are taking or will take that can move the world in the direction of your dream for it?

Who are your key partners, friends, allies that give you courage and help in bringing these dreams alive?

Embodying Hope and Learning as a Way of Life

Above all, hope is a choice—not a feeling. We can tune ourselves to the frequency of hope by the questions we ask and the questions we live.

~**Bliss Browne**, Ten Years of Imagination in Action

What issues and opportunities keep getting your attention, things you're thinking about, wishing you could make better

What ways can you now see to invest yourself (talent, time, treasure) where you live and work to make your community better?

Who might help you and stand with you in making the difference you want to make?

Who might be your best learning partners?

Setting Forth with Questions and Learn and Serve

The most important questions don't seem to have ready answers, but the questions themselves have healing power when they are shared. An answer is an invitation to stop thinking about something, to stop wondering. Life has no such stopping places. Life is a process whose every event is connected to the moment that just went by. An unanswered question is a fine traveling companion. It sharpens your eye for the road.

—**Rachel Remen**, Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal.

What questions are you leaving the conference with, questions that invite you to further exploration and reflection?

Celebrating Learning

What are you especially glad to have learned and done here? What new ways do you now see yourself, the world and your community?

Draw an image of how your hope, skills, questions, stories and strengths have grown as a result of your time here...