While not all of us are painters, poets, or inventors, we are all creators, molding our life’s journey, putting forth new ideas, and shaping the environments in which we live. Self-expression and creativity are essential “life skills” in today’s world, helping young people to develop self-confidence, communicate effectively, work as a team, manage their time, and set goals. This inspiring In the Mix episode, co-hosted by musician and composer Moby, explores different ways teens around the world are finding a voice through self-expression.

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

Studies conducted by RMC Research on previous In the Mix specials have shown that these programs engage the interest of teenagers, deliver information, catalyze discussion on critical issues, as well as promote analytical thinking and a greater sense of self-efficacy among teens. The aim is to encourage thought and allow teens to generate their own creative solutions.

In this guide, we have outlined specific questions based on the program’s content, as well as answers. These questions can be used to open up more analytical discussion about related concepts. Also included are in-class activities and longer-term projects. We suggest showing the entire program to the group and then running individual segments followed by discussion.

In the Mix AWARDS

- CINE Golden Eagle Awards for: Media Literacy: Get The News?; 9-11: Looking Back…Moving Forward; Financial Literacy: On the Money; Living With…Illness; Student Power: Organizing for School Reform
- Young Adult Library Services Association’s “Selected DVD/Videos List” for: Living With…Illness; Student Power: Organizing for School Reform; Arts Education: A+; ECSTASY; Live by the Gun, Die by the Gun; School Violence: Answers From the Inside; 9-11: Looking Back…Moving Forward
- National Mental Health Association Media Awards for: Depression: On the Edge; In the Mix website
- National Emmy for Community Service Programming

Please visit www.inthemix.org for full descriptions, video clips, transcripts, resources and more about this and other In the Mix programs.
SELF-EXPRESSION, SELF-ESTEEM... around the world

This guide to SELF-EXPRESSION, SELF-ESTEEM...AROUND THE WORLD contains five major sections which include questions, discussion topics, and activities, as well as a list of resources.

SECTION 1

CANADA

At the Perry Sound Friendship Center in Ontario, Canada, Aboriginal youth learn to make drums and gain insight into the traditional role of the drum in their native culture. Through drumming, the youth connect to their roots as well as to their future. This segment focuses on self-expression as a tool for exploring and understanding one’s own cultural or ethnic identity.

1. What is the significance of the drum in Aboriginal culture?

   the drum is a social instrument that was once found at the center of every community; the drum brings people together for socializing and storytelling; the beating of the drum can help people clear their minds

2. What essential life skills do participants in the drum workshop gain?

   participants celebrate their culture and learn the art of storytelling; they learn ways to connect to their roots, community, and each other

Further Discussion:

- Culture plays an important role in self-expression. What are your own cultural roots? What traditions (e.g. art, dance, music) from your culture emphasize self-expression? How can identifying with a particular culture enhance our self-understanding, our self-confidence, and our ability to relate to others?

- John describes the drum as a central meeting point or gathering place for native communities in Canada. What objects or places hold similar roles in your own community? What about in the communities of other cultures you have experienced or learned about?

3. Why is self-expression important for these Aboriginal youth? Why is self-expression important for young people in general?

   self-expression gives them an outlet for emotions and feelings that might otherwise remain bottled-up inside them; it helps them develop problem-solving and communications skills; it helps them socialize and make friends

Related Activities:

- Have students conduct research into the needs and issues facing indigenous groups in different parts of the world. Explore what the word “indigenous” means. Indigenous groups are often the subject of discrimination in their societies. What can be done at the individual and societal level to create better understanding of and respect for indigenous cultures?

- One function of the Perry Sound Friendship Center is as a meeting place for native and non-native people. Have students choose populations or groups in their own school, community, or area, and propose a friendship center to foster better understanding and interaction between these groups. What kinds of barriers exist between these groups? What are the causes of distrust or misunderstanding between the groups? What sorts of activities or programs would be most effective in encouraging understanding or cooperation?
TURKEY

Through “Dreams Workshops” in Turkey, trained young adults serve as volunteer art teachers to children from disadvantaged communities. During weekly workshops, the children explore their creativity, learn to express themselves, and develop relationships with positive role models. This segment focuses on the role mentoring and volunteerism can play in self-expression, illustrating how these young teachers acquire leadership skills that will serve them throughout their careers.

1. Why do you think these art classes are called “Dreams Workshops”?
   
   * dreaming is closely linked with imagination, and imagination can be the source of creativity; the purpose of the workshop is to inspire children to think freely, as they would in a dream; through art, people can express their hopes and dreams for themselves and the world*

2. Why is it important for children to exercise their imaginations and express themselves through art?
   
   * imagination and artistic expression can help children learn to socialize, communicate, and develop confidence; art can allow children to express ideas and concepts that they might have difficulty putting into words*

Further Discussion:

- What dreams for yourself or your world would you like to explore through art? What artistic mediums (music, painting, sculpture, writing, etc.) excite you most?

3. The Dreams Workshop volunteers spoke of developing greater confidence and communication skills through teaching children about art. What obstacles did they initially face? How did they work through them?
   
   * at first, some of the volunteers doubted themselves and were unsure about relating to children: they thought they would not have the patience, or the knowledge of art, or the confidence to speak up and form relationships; they worked through these doubts by spending lots of time with the children and by expressing their enthusiasm for art*

4. Why are confidence and effective communication considered critical “life skills”?
   
   * confidence and communication skills affect every aspect of life and are essential for people to: succeed, gain independence, make their thoughts and ideas known, form relationships, and become educated and employed*

Further Discussion:

- How confident are you in your own artistic capabilities? If you have doubts about your own artistic ability, what could you do to overcome them?

Related Activity:

- Develop a volunteer project whereby students identify a set of artistic skills and interests they would like to share with their younger peers, either within their own school or the surrounding community. What should they take into consideration in developing the project? What excites them? What makes them nervous? Explore ways of implementing the project. Once finished, have students share what they’ve learned.

CHINA

For more than 20 years, the Little Masters program in China has equipped children under the age of 15 with journalism skills. In the process, they gain greater confidence, develop their creativity, learn to work as a team, and explore important social issues in their community. This segment, featuring participants from the Shanghai Little Masters program, emphasizes the role of peer understanding and tolerance in self-expression.

1. What are some differences the Shanghai teens noticed between themselves and the rural teens?
   
   * the teens in rural areas only brought water, while the urban teens had snacks and soda; the rural teens did not have money for postage stamps while the urban teens could afford them easily*

2. Why is it important in today’s China for young people growing up in cities to better understand their peers in rural areas?
greater understanding breaks down barriers and fosters cooperation and friendship; if urban citizens learn more about those in rural areas, they will be less likely to judge them and vice versa; when two groups understand each other's lives, they are better able to help each other.

3. One of the Little Masters participants says: “I learned a lot from working in the newspaper office that I couldn’t learn from a classroom.” What might some of these things be?

- how to meet deadlines, how to interview people they’re meeting for the first time, how to cooperate with co-workers, how to write interesting stories, how to succeed in a working environment

Further Discussion:
- What are the similarities between writing and fine arts, such as music and painting? How is the act of self-expression different when you use words instead of music and pictures?
- What are some issues in your school or community that you’d like to research and communicate to others?

Related Activity:
- Just as the Little Masters participants did, have students develop a newspaper of their own. Research story ideas, design a layout, assign writers and illustrators, determine who your audience is, and develop a plan for distributing the paper once finished.

1. What personal changes did participants in the video production program experience?
- they explored new ideas and subjects; they learned that they can help others; some became more relaxed and more confident

2. Cámara! Ahi Nos Vemos participants chose to look at issues surrounding pollution in their community. What did they learn?
- littering leads to contamination; steep fines and enforcement can discourage littering; some people refuse to use garbage cans, even when asked

Further Discussion:
- One of the boys involved in the program was a former troublemaker, and was even kicked out of two schools before he started making videos. How did the program help him to turn his life around? If you were involved in such a program, what do you think you would get out of it?
- In what ways do you currently serve as a role model for your younger peers or family members? In what ways might you serve as a mentor to others in your school or community?

Related Activity:
- If your school has a video production program, have students pick an important local issue and, like the teens in Cámara! Ahi Nos Vemos, create a short video on the subject. What do teens and adults in the community think about the issue? What is being done about it? What solutions can the students propose?
- Show students a television story or short documentary on a particular news event or topic, and then have them read a newspaper or magazine account on the same subject. Discuss the differences and similarities between the visual account and the written one. What advantages come from using moving pictures? What are the advantages of the written word? How do people react differently to the two mediums?

SECTION 4

MEXICO

In a disadvantaged area just outside of Mexico City, young people learn how to make short documentary videos through the Cámara! Ahi Nos Vemos program. These youth, in turn, reach out to younger children, engaging them in efforts to identify important issues in their community. Through learning how to use a video camera, participants in the program develop valuable skills and learn to express themselves. This segment highlights the connection between self-expression and community activism, as these students gain a greater understanding of and connection to their communities. Adults also gain more understanding of and respect for the teens.
UNITED STATES

At the de Zavala Middle School in Dallas, Texas, students use a variety of artistic media—photography, video, poetry, mask-making, drawing, and painting—to express their ideas on the theme of global destiny. Then, students—selected “ambassadors”—create storyboards and learn how to use computer technology to incorporate their art into digital stories, or short videos, viewable on a computer. Through exploring the arts, the students develop key life skills, such as goal setting, teamwork, confidence, effective communication, and critical thinking.

1. The digital stories would not have been possible without teamwork. What were some of the obstacles the de Zavala teams faced in coming together as a unit? How did they overcome them? *some of the teens initially found it hard to work together because of stereotypes about each other, differences in age, differences in style and outlook, differences in technical ability; working together towards a common goal and learning to make compromises helped them get past these problems*

2. What are some of the things that the students learned about themselves while working on the project? *they had artistic and technological strengths they didn’t think they possessed; they could get along with people they once mistrusted; they have the ability to be patient and compromise; they learned that seeing things from someone else’s viewpoint has benefits*

3. Planning and organization is essential to developing a digital story. What steps did the students need to follow? *scripting, creating visuals and objects, creating text and titles, creating music and sounds, video editing, audio editing*

Further Discussion:
- What are your thoughts on the theme of “Global Destiny”? What do you think the world will be like for the next generation? Will life be easier, or become more challenging? Do you take a generally rosy view of the future, or a gloomy one? What forms of self-expression do you use to show your feelings on the subject?
- One of the teens in the segment says that people often think that teenagers don’t really have opinions. Do you think that adults really feel this way? Why? If so, what might teens do to convince them otherwise?

Related Activity:
- Have students visit [www.makeaconnection.org/us](http://www.makeaconnection.org/us) to view some of the clips made by the de Zavala students. Assign one, or have them choose one, to analyze. What is the message the artists are trying to express? How do the visuals, audio, text, or editing convey this message? If you were on the team, what changes would you have suggested?
- Have groups make storyboards (sketches and images with words underneath, representing shots in a video) for a video art piece of their own. Students should choose a theme and a message, and limit the proposed video to one minute. Images can represent still photos, artwork, objects, moving images or text/titles. Include all spoken words, lyrics, and music cues. Next, have all students critique and discuss the storyboarded proposals. Do they think the message is clear? What elements work best? What could be changed to improve the project?
WHAT ARE LIFE SKILLS?

Below is a list of those core life skills that are increasingly considered vital to a young person’s success in today’s complex, fast-changing world.

- **Communication** or interpersonal skills, the ability to express oneself and communicate with people from different backgrounds or cultures.
- **Conflict management**, the ability to mediate conflicts among others, and to manage one’s own aggression or anger.
- **Contribution**, the ability to look beyond oneself and to contribute to the greater community.
- **Cooperation**, the ability to work in a group or a team, to compromise, and to lead.
- **Creative thinking**, the ability to develop creative and innovative solutions to challenges and problems.
- **Critical thinking**, the ability to ask questions and to challenge information, situations, and authority.
- **Empathetic skills**, the ability to connect with other people on a deeper level.
- **Managing emotions** and the ability to deal with one’s own feelings and to express them.
- **Respect** for self and others (cultural tolerance).
- **Responsibility**, the ability to manage one’s own life, to be accountable to other people, and to assume responsibility for things and people.
- **Self-confidence**, the quality necessary to make informed choices, resist peer pressure, and to develop a strong character.

RESOURCES

**General:**
- **Americans for the Arts**
  www.artsusa.org/
- **National Art Education Association**
  www.naea-reston.org/
- **The Arts Education Partnership**
  www.aep-arts.org/

**By Segment:**
- **Canada: Aboriginal**
  Canada Portal
  www.aicn-inac.gc.ca/ndl/prs/ja2001/portal/index;
  www.makeaconnection.ca
- **Turkey: Ministry of Culture and Tourism**
  www.kultur.gov.tr/portal/default_en.asp
  www.makeaconnection.org/opencms/makeaconnection/org/content/Programs/turkey/
- **China: Make a Connection**
  www.makeaconnection.org/opencms/opencms/makeaconnection/org/content/Programs/China
- **Mexico: Camara Ahi Nos Vemos**
  www.makeaconnection.org/opencms/opencms/makeaconnection/org/content/Programs/mexico
- **USA: de Zavala Digital Stories**
  www.makeaconnection.org/us;
  www.bigthought.org

www.inthemix.org