

Additional Resources from VOX ATL

At VOX ATL, we refer to adults as
“guides on the side”
 to reinforce the idea that we support
 teen-led spaces and youth leadership.

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Guide on the Side
content focused on
high-quality
youth development



voxatl.org/about/guide-on-the-side/



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BOX ON TOOLS

**POETRY,
PROSE &
POWER:**
SELF-
EXPRESSION
IS SOCIAL-
EMOTIONAL
LEARNING

Self-Expression Is SEL

As youth-development professionals, we know young people are dealing with many different significant life experiences, including traumas and mental health challenges, many of which were exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. We are committed to supporting the development of social-emotional learning (SEL) and using healing-centered practices to create spaces where all teens can thrive.

An important component of SEL and healing-centered practice is building community where every participant feels valued and welcomed, exactly as they are. We intentionally create those spaces with the following practices, including culturally relevant and responsive community-builders, community agreements (aka “Ground Rules”), honoring pronouns, strengths-based and restorative language, and intentional power-sharing.

Youth Leaders

Training and ongoing supported learning is an essential component of quality peer-to-peer leadership. YD organizations can support peer and near-peer leadership through scaffolded experiences that start with intentional training and include practice and reflection.

In addition to intentional facilitation training, teens can maintain a position of power-sharing with their adult guides. This can be executed through co-facilitating workshops and providing internships where youth can manage peer-to-peer communications, assist their peers in learning new skills, and allow them to take the lead on orienting new youth to your program.

At VOX ATL, teen leaders also serve on our board of directors, participate in hiring processes, assist with evaluation processes, and lead their own programming on topics they're interested in. In addition to genuine community building, these forms of leadership allow for youth to feel a sense of ownership and pride in programming, as well as building hard and soft skills now and for post-secondary success.

AWW Near-Peer Model

Atlanta Word Works (AWW) takes a community approach to writing, workshopping, and applying knowledge to cultivate teaching artists. All AWW facilitators, guest mentors, and collective coaches are alumnus of Atlanta Word Works and have experience in attending AWW workshops, collective gatherings, and poetry performance events before intensively learning skills to craft agendas for creative

learning experiences. This allows for a generational type structure to form, as coaches and facilitators are often friends or former teammates of the youth they teach. Specifically emphasizing learning and improving by doing depicts teaching artistry as a muscle that any person can strengthen, no matter what age you start in the organization. This model encourages Atlanta Word Works teens to see themselves growing in their artistry and equalizes the adult Artists around them.



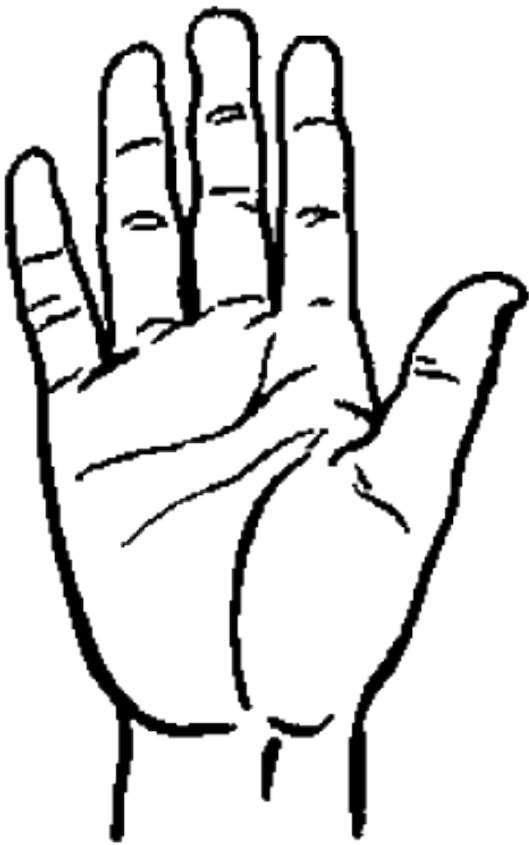
NOTES

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Palm Pages

Instructions: Trace the outline of your hand hugely on a sheet of paper, large enough so that you can write in or around the fingers. *Label as follows:*

- Thumb (finger 1):** things that keep you grounded, or things you can't live without
- Index (finger 2):** things that are on your first, most pure mind or things that come to you as naturally as breathing
- Middle (finger 3):** Forget-about-it finger — things you're tired of or simply deciding not to give your energy today
- Ring (finger 4):** something you are committed to and passionate about on a personal or community level, or things you see for the future
- Pinky (finger 5):** small pleasures, what you do simply for your enjoyment, things you keep around simply because you like them.



Your Turn!
Create your own Palm Page

Community Building

Mindful Moments

We incorporate mindful moments at the beginning of program activities whenever possible, providing opportunity for all to ground themselves in the present moment while acknowledging what else we might be bringing to the space.

A mindful moment can be anything from taking a few deep breaths to a guided meditation. This illustrates practices participants can use on their own time, brings participants to the present, and settles the nervous system, increasing participants' abilities to engage.



Mindful moment in action — a breath-based grounding technique

Visit the VOX ATL YouTube page for the video.

Go-Arounds, Icebreakers & Energizers

Go-arounds, energizers, and icebreaker activities serve as an opportunity to build community, level the playing field, and ensure all voices are heard. According to VOX ATL participants, when individuals are encouraged to participate early on in a workshop/gathering, they are more likely to engage throughout the session.

Some of our favorite *icebreakers:

- Name game with motion
- A Big Wind Blows / Meet Me in the Middle (or Meet me on Camera for virtual programming)
- 2 Truths & a Lie

*This is also space for youth input and leadership! They can come up with the best Go-Arounds, Icebreakers & Energizers to meet the group's needs.

Ground Rules / Group Agreements

When a group co-creates agreements (we call these “Ground Rules”), participants get to say what they need to feel brave and safe, and they develop a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for that space. This is another place for youth voice and leadership, and fosters SEL connected to social awareness, relationship skills, self-awareness and self-management.



A photo of ground rules from our virtual space

Creating A Vibe

From the music playing and the “welcome” to an activity, to attention getters, lighting and content on the walls, everything around us establishes a vibe and energy in our spaces. That vibe will be set (not so effectively) if we do nothing – and it will encourage creativity and courage for SEL when done with intention.

Attention Getters

The goal is to facilitate a space suitable for dialogue and activity, so we utilize affirming attention grabbers that encourage participants rather than commanding silence.

Sound Effects

From popular music to a soft chime, sounds can also get a group’s attention. Sounds can also set a vibe during individual or small group work sessions, too, being mindful not to choose something jarring or triggering.



Music

Participants can take turns DJing, co-create playlists, and share their original music.

Call & Response

“When I say love, you say love. Love!” Response: “Love!” This serves as a positive attention grabber. It reminds every individual of the affirming energy in the room, encouraging every person to momentarily acknowledge love and make space for it. VOX and AWW use attention grabbers like these, as well as making embellishments on a few better known ones.

Recipe for Self-care

Instructions: Write a recipe for your own personal version of self-care and self soothing.

When crafting your recipe, consider expressing:

- the measurements for ingredients (time allotted, amount used, etc.)
- how often/seldom each ingredient is used
- where the ingredients are placed in your space
- how you feel after adding each ingredient

Consider adding to your self-care creation:

- an item for your inner child
- an item for your inner teen
- a scent that brings you comfort
- a presence that brings you positive feelings
- an article of clothing that makes you feel good
- items/memories that make you laugh
- hobbies and interests

Tia's self-care recipe.
- 1 history documentary, something obscure
- 1 phone call with mom,
*talk for 3 hours without even realizing it
- Cry. Wail and let yourself see it.
- Rice, noodles. Something with zucchini and tomatoes and spinach.
*Chew slowly. Watch nothing
- 4 good twitter threads. Really really funny scrollers.
*Share them with your friends and make inside jokes. Promise to use them for 50 years.
- 16 pillows. Just because.
- 6 big towels that cocoon me, in preparation for the unveiling
- 2 body-length mirrors, to satisfy my extraness.
- 30 minute standstill, nude. Vivid.
*Let my hands travel my face and torso to put my name to all the surface.

Your Turn!
Write your recipe for self-care below!



Environment

Set up your space for success with a nametag station that invites people to share their pronouns, includes comfy seating, young people’s original art, affirmation walls and music your young people enjoy. Greet each person individually, and encourage peer-to-peer conversations. Even if the space isn’t yours to decorate, you can bring in materials – even on a budget – to foster culturally responsive spaces!