



"It's Your Life" (IYL) is based on extensive qualitative research conducted by the Youth Transition Network (YTN) with over 3,000 adolescents. IYL was tested with Durango School District 9R for two years at Keys to High School Success where it was one of the top rated sessions by 8th grade students and high school mentors.

Research Summary

YTN's research began by examining the reasons that result in 28% of college freshmen not making it through their freshmen year. The common issues identified in our interviews caused YTN to look for the root cause that had such a high percentage of high school seniors/college freshmen focused on "Freedom" from their parents & high school rather than on their success in college.

As YTN sought to understand the "Freedom Factor" we found that a vast majority of late middle school/high school students were **frustrated by their parents expectations and control** often leading to some form of dual life of which their parents were unaware. Given the oppositional nature of the adolescent brain, students frequently push back against adults' expectations, control and pressure. This often **led to the very performance issues** parents and other adults were attempting to prevent.

YTN also found that **students who performed at peak levels** were either academically gifted or had a vision for their own future. By contrast, a majority of adolescents with whom YTN interacted had **no idea** where they were headed or what would leverage their natural abilities. When lack of vision combines with lack of self-understanding and the oppositional nature pushes back, students adopt a less productive mindset and motivation wanes. This results in lower performance/grades. Students reported that this led to a growing sense of internal negativity that often resulted in a collapse of confidence. Left unchecked, this led to an "I Don't Care" attitude.

Today a vast majority of **12 to 16 year olds do not have goals of their own** in spite of encouragement from teachers and school programs. Parents' expectations and a lack of self-understanding and vision prevent the adoption of goals, unless approached in a holistic manner.

Program Summary

"It's Your Life" is engineered to holistically address the issues identified in our research. IYL seeks to draw upon every students' internal desire to achieve through an interactive self-discovery process. To accomplish this IYL draws students into discussions through interactive exercises that help them identify their frustrations, motivation issues, hurts and escapes. Interwoven into these activities are concepts and information that help students understand the adolescent brain, the redefinition of childhood, core values, and the importance of understanding themselves, situations and strengths.

Integrating this with Strength Finders 2.0 allows students to see their internal potential and possible paths for their future. When students recognize their potential and identify a personal path in the context of their desired future, it leads to discussions about potential life directions. The result is a new perspective, internal motivation and an increased desire and willingness to take the reins of their lives.

A majority of students develop self-understanding and a greater vision for their future. This leads to a willingness and even desire to establish some near and mid-term objectives and goals that are documented and placed in strategic locations. IYL concludes by helping students consider if the direction they are currently taking will help them achieve the future success they desire.

Key Concepts

Definition of Adulthood
Expectation Identification Discussion Circles
Adolescent Brain Development Understanding
New Look at the Meaning of Expectations
High School Transition Exercise
Society's Definition of Youth Interaction
Source of Motivation Issues Exercise
Goals Research
Sources of Success
Core Values, Past Hurts and Common Escapes
Strength Finders 2.0 Results
Strengths and possible career Ideas list
Vision, Passion and Goals
It's Your Life, where do you want it to go?

Potential Delivery Options

In the Classroom

- Two Class Sessions
- Two Assignments
 - Strength Finders 2.0 (week one)
 - Self reflection/future direction paper (week two)

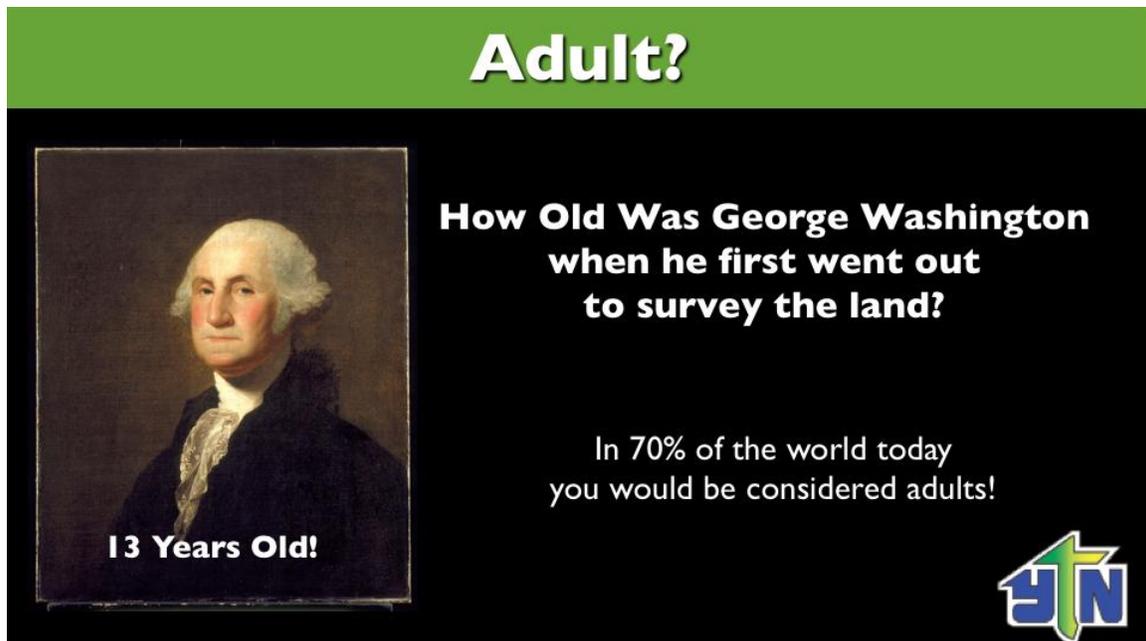
Small Groups of 50 Students

- 90 Minutes
- Round Tables
- Strength Finders Results are brought to session
- Self Reflection/Future Direction Paper assigned at close

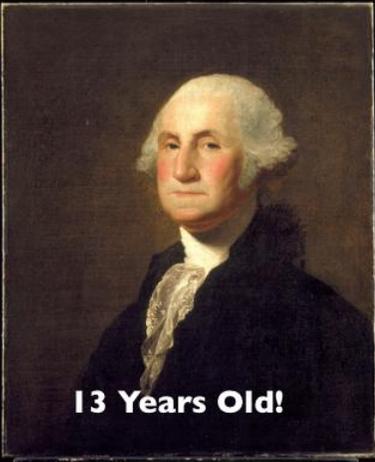
2 Large Groups

- 60 minutes
- Staff to be in student discussion exercise circles
- Strength Finders assigned and done after the session

Key Images



Adult?



**How Old Was George Washington
when he first went out
to survey the land?**

In 70% of the world today
you would be considered adults!

13 Years Old!



Group Activity

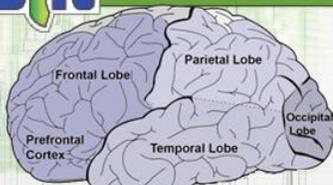


List all the expectations you feel from parents, school or friends regarding your behavior, school work, activities, and or home life you need to do to be successful.

Are there times you argue with you parents even though you know they are right?



Adolescent Brain



Brain development kicks into high gear 18 months prior to puberty!

Activity in the Frontal Lobe Decreases!

Impulse control, planning and decision making

Less inhibited

More from the gut

More oppositional

Hyper Sensitive to Expectations

Adolescent Brain

“Teens themselves may be able to shape their own brain development. For example, neuroanatomical evidence suggests that learning and positive experiences help build complex, adaptive brains.” Dr. Amen



What Demotivates You?

Circle the three things that demotivate you the most from the list in your notes packet.

Parents' Pressure

Boring Classes

Lack of confidence / past failure

Mean Teachers

Turmoil in my life

Parental Issues

Depression

Parents' Micro-management

Classes with no point or relevance

Bad Teachers

School has no relevance to my life



After talking with thousands of students there was a consistent theme!

**Young adults give other people far too much power
over their lives and their future!**

A bad teacher

A boring teacher

Parents and their frustrating expectations

A friend, family member, or adult that talks down to us or hurts us.