

## SEL Activity

# Who do I Want to Be?



grades 6-8



30-35 minutes

### Objectives

- Reflect on goals about the person you want to become.
- Reflect on the impact you can make as a young person.
- Realize that you don't need to wait until you are an adult to become the person you want to be.

### Essential Questions

- Why is it more important to think about who you want to be than what you want to be when you grow up?
- How can you make a difference as a young person?

### Vocabulary

**Narrative:** a spoken or written account of connected events; a story.

**Empower:** make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.

**Amplify:** increase the volume.

#### MATERIALS + MEDIA

Video: [Stop Asking Me, 'What do You Want to be When You Grow Up?' \(9:17\)](#)

Worksheet: [Who I Want to Be \(PDF | Google\)](#)

#### SEL CORE COMPETANCIES

Self-awareness  
Social awareness  
Relationship skills

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### Before you Begin

- Preview the TED Talk: [Stop Asking Me, 'What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?' \(9:17\)](#) to decide how much of the video to show.
- Complete the [Worksheet: Who I Want to Be \(PDF | Google\)](#) to serve as a model for students.

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### Program Connections

This activity supports all lessons in our ThinkGive Middle School programs, in which students reflect on who they are as they take action. To learn more, visit our [PROGRAMS](#) page.

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# THINK • GIVE

Write two statements on the board/whiteboard/chart paper: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” and “Who do you want to be when you grow up?”

**Ask:** Raise your hand if you have been asked the “what” question.  
Pause for students to see who has their hands up.

**Ask:** Raise your hand if you have been asked the “who” question.  
Share what you observe (e.g., more students raised their hands for the “what” question).

**Ask:** Which question is more important and why?  
Remain neutral until students respond, then explain that the video they will watch will offer insight into which is more important and why.

**Watch:** [Stop Asking Me, 'What do You Want to be When You Grow Up?](#) (9:17) by Todd Amatayakul at TEDxYouth@ISBangkok. Todd shares why the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” does not empower youth and why the question “Who do you want to be and how do you want to leave your mark on the world?” is empowering. He also provides examples of youth changing the world.

**NOTE:** If short on time, either stop at minute 4:21 or watch from minute 5:44 to 9:11.

**Discuss:**

- Why is it important to reflect on who you want to be and not only what job you want?
- What does “Who do you want to be?” have to do with “What mark do you want to leave on the world”?
- What does “leaving your mark on the world” mean to you?
- Explain how other young people inspire you with who they are and their mark on the world.

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# CONNECT + CLOSE

**Who Do I Want to Be?**

**Ask:** What is a personal statement?

**Explain:** A personal statement helps individuals to be guided by what matters to them. When you have an important decision or are going through a challenging experience, a personal statement can help you make clearer decisions or take steps that reflect the person you aspire to be.

**Explain:** Write a personal statement that reflects who you want to be and how you want to leave your mark on the world. Be creative and dream as big as you want, but keep your responses focused on who you want to be (now and in the future) and how you want to reflect this best version of yourself in the world instead of what you want to be when you grow up.

Share your model worksheet responses.

If students need support, provide the following examples:

**Values:** advocacy, justice, kindness

Personal statement: "I want to be an advocate for justice. I will do this by speaking up and asking for help from an adult I trust if I witness someone at school being treated badly."

**Values:** caring, paying it forward, responsibility

Personal statement: "I believe we are all responsible for each other's well-being. I will volunteer at soup kitchens and shelters for the houseless in my spare time."

When they have completed their worksheet, students form small groups and share their responses. Be sure to model kind listening skills! Finally, invite 1-2 student volunteers to share their responses with the whole group.

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## ACTION

Explain: In the coming days/week, try out one of the action steps you jotted down on your Who I Want to Be worksheet to continue your journey toward becoming the person you aspire to be. You don't have to do this alone. Adults, peers, and others you trust will support you on this journey. Share your personal statement with them and ask them to encourage you along the way!

## REFLECTION

Lead a discussion or allow students to journal. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What's something new you learned about yourself from this activity?
- What's challenging about reflecting on who you want to be and what mark you want to leave on the world?
- What and/or who could support you in becoming the person you want to be?
- How do you feel when you read your personal statement?