

TRANSITIONS

Sustaining Social Change

*there is no beginning without an end
what is over? what isn't?
what can I let go of?
chaos can*

Challenging Perceptions

The Neutral Zone is a time to question how you perceive yourself, others, your goals – and potential obstacles – in life. This phase might feel like a clean slate, or offer the chance to look at yourself and the world around you with new eyes. At the very least, try on some different lenses every now and then.

For example, the Transitions Team at Children’s Village (CV), a residential center for young men in foster care, developed an exercise to trigger the young men to start challenging perceptions they had of themselves and their futures. They split a group of young men into two, and told one group to dress professionally for a job interview and the other to dress casually for a day in New York City. They took both groups to Bloomingdales on Fifth Avenue and had them shop for designated items and ask for job applications.

Few of the young men felt comfortable in the store, but, unsurprisingly, the youth in suits felt less out of place. Those young men discovered they enjoyed wearing the suit and the confidence it gave them. As the Team continued debriefing the experience, the youth shared important insights on how they view themselves and the world around them. One young man felt that the Bloomingdales employees “were perfect with no problems, and I’m not.” Most felt that Bloomingdales represented a world that they could not enter because of their race, socioeconomic status, and experiences.

Once those feelings were unearthed, the CV Transitions Team helped the young men challenge them.

What are some perceptions that you have of yourself that you might need to change?

What are some perceptions that you have of others that you might need to change?

What are some obstacles that have kept you from accomplishing your dreams in the past? Are they still obstacles?

Think of a few experiences that might trigger you to start challenging your perceptions. New environments? New way of dressing? New relationships?