

Activity 1.1a

Personal Vision and Mission Statement

Time: 20 minutes

Goal: This exercise is designed to help you frame your individual dreams into personal visions, and then from them, describe your personal mission. Because the end result of this visioning process typically requires much reflection and soul searching, we can only hope to frame a preliminary vision and mission statement that is likely to take shape and grow with time.

Steps:

1. First, just relax and listen to this idea: “Young people often have big hopes and dreams for what they can do to improve their worlds. If each one of us could remember our dreams as children, we might recall that we had some big dreams, too.”
2. Take a few minutes to think about yourself as a young child. If you had been asked at that time what you would do to change the world if you could, what would your response have been? What would you have wished were different? Make notes of the most important parts of your vision so that they can be shared with others.
3. Try to remember when you were an adolescent (if you are now older than that). Again, take a few minutes to think about what you wanted to change in the world. Put aside the practical considerations and fears that often bind adult thinking. Also, make some notes of important aspects.
4. Now, brainstorm a list of dreams you would like to see come true today. What would things look like if what matters to you were actually brought about? For example, your list might include: “All children have caring adults in their lives,” “Safe neighborhoods,” “A just world.” The list should include both things that you believe you might be able to influence and those that you may believe are out of your reach. Try not to limit your thinking to the context of current reality, but do think about an ideal for your family, neighborhood, community, or group that is important to you. You need not limit yourself to a single vision—multiple vision statements are encouraged!

Now, if you can, put this vision or ideal into just a few words, like “Children with caring adults” or “Healthy neighborhoods,” to make a **vision statement**.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Justice. Child well-being. Appreciation for differences. Now there are some elements for a very powerful vision statement!

5. Translate the broader ideals and the dreams you’ve identified into a **mission statement**—what you will do and why. This should make sense for you personally and includes the what and why of reaching those dreams. For example, “My personal mission is to build a healthy neighborhood [the why] by advocating for better schools and jobs for our people [the what].” These are going to be the **things that matter to you**, and can be shaped into a personal mission statement. Write out a sentence to remind you of *what* you are doing and *why* you are doing it.

6. Using the key ideas from these reflections, complete the following statement:

My name is:

and my personal vision (dreams for making a difference in this work) is:

Carrying It Forward

Reflect on the value of dreams of a better community, and how they can help us to see things anew. Is it hard to verbalize “dreams” as an adult? If so, why? Is it possible to make dreams come true? Why or why not? If we work to achieve our dreams, but don’t succeed, do we fail? Should we even try? How do you help others to dream?