



Curriculum Overview

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The Dream It, Be It curriculum represents those areas where girls need skills in order to live their dreams. Because we don't expect that all girls will know what they want to do for the rest of their lives and we also know that plans change, the skills developed through the curriculum can be applied to any goals girls identify throughout their education and careers.

Each session of the curriculum takes either 60 or 75 minutes to complete. Sessions can be the agenda of a one-day conference or separate topics for small group mentoring meetings. The sessions build on one another and should be presented in order. Each session begins with an overview, specific learning objectives, supplies and handouts needed, and an agenda. Following that, there are specific instructions for each learning exercise.

Below is an overview of each of the seven sessions:

Session 1: Discovering Your Dreams

As the beginning of the Dream It, Be It curriculum, this session's goal is to begin to establish a safe, welcoming space for participants, to begin to develop group cohesion, and to create an opportunity for participants to consider future aspirations. The role of the facilitators in this session is to set guidelines for a safe space, and maintain the safe space in future sessions. The role of the facilitators is also to lead participants through activities that will encourage them to better know one another and themselves. Through the activities listed below, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their values, aspirations, and interests in a comfortable environment. Each participant will hopefully be inspired to envision her future and be empowered to believe in her own capacity to make dreams a reality.

Session 2: Exploring Careers

Many adolescent girls (and adults, too!) say they have no idea what they want to do with the rest of their lives. Although some girls may have dreamed about a certain career from a young age, many experience anxiety about an uncertain future in the workplace. Dream It, Be It aims to empower adolescent girls with the confidence and tools they need to achieve their professional and personal dreams. This second session will focus on career exploration. It will lead participants through a self-assessment of interests and values because what participants care about now can predict fulfilling careers in the future. As participants become more aware of their own values and strengths, they will develop greater self-confidence and a more practical approach to future career decision-making.

Session 3: Creating Achievable Goals

This session addresses the important personal and professional skill of goal setting. The participants may have varying levels of experience with setting goals; some may be setting goals for the first time,

while others might already have developed defined goals. The facilitator's role is to accommodate each participant's comfort level by emphasizing that the aim of this session is not to set personal and professional goals for the rest of their lives. Rather, facilitators should stress this session serves as practice with goal-setting and will help participants learn how to develop a clear, reasonable goal as well as how to map out small action steps to achieve the goal.

Session 4: Rising Above Obstacles

This session seeks to address the adversity that women of all ages face in their career advancement, often just by the nature of their gender. Sexism and gender norms may be difficult concepts to understand, since many of their attributes are considered "natural" and therefore invisible in our everyday lives. We are all socialized in cultures that tend to value men over women, which may normalize gender discrimination. So, participants will likely have varying levels of awareness related to gender discrimination; some participants may question its existence while others may have knowingly experienced it firsthand. While every woman's experience is different, it is important for girls to be aware of likely obstacles to their career success. This session introduces participants to the specific adversity that many women face, provokes critical thinking about gender norms, and provides participants with strategies to combat this adversity.

Session 5: Turning Failure into Success

Many girls learn to fear failure from an early age. Getting the correct answer in school is rewarded, while the wrong answer is negatively reinforced in various ways, such as low grades, scolding from a teacher, or teasing from a classmate. Fear of experiencing a failure might be motivating to some, but it can often be paralyzing and keep many adolescent girls feeling stuck and afraid to try new things or go after big goals in life. This session aims to directly address the fear of failure by introducing the idea that experiencing a failure is a key step in the process of learning and growing. In this session, participants will learn about resilience and how to reframe experiencing a failure to understand the usefulness of mistakes in order to move forward.

Session 6: Balancing Your Stress

Adolescents today report higher levels of stress than ever before. Many experience significant academic and familial pressure to perform well in school. Others experience social pressure due to social media, which serves as a constant reminder of issues such as friendship, romance, and fitting in. Adults deal with high pressure situations too. Women especially are often expected to perform well at work while also taking care of their families and homes. These pressures create a high stress environment that can have serious effects on physical and mental health for adolescent and adult females alike. Accordingly, this session aims to give participants the tools to identify and better manage stress. In this session, participants will engage in a game that simulates the everyday stresses of balancing various responsibilities. Participants will then identify stress in their own lives and acquire new techniques for managing stress and taking care of themselves.

Session 7: Putting Dreams into Action

For many, dreams are simply dreams. They do not necessarily lead to direct action to turn those dreams into a reality. This final session addresses the gap between dreams and action by weaving together participants' vision with practical skills developed in previous sessions. In this closing session, participants will create a concrete action plan for achieving their goals. Participants will also identify members of their family and community who can support them in implementing their action plan. Finally, participants will spend significant time with Soroptimist club members and community members to learn from their education and career journeys as well as what opportunities exist for educational and training schools, how to apply for financial assistance, how to find local career

opportunities, and more. Overall, this session will encourage present action that prepares for future transformation of dreams into reality, and will further develop supportive and sustainable facilitator-participant relationships.