

Sustaining Your Spirit

This Activity Focuses on

- Self awareness
- Making positive choices
- Developing appreciation

Setting the Stage

We are surrounded by both positive and negative energies, and the energy you allow in your life makes a difference. How does that translate into daily living? With every encounter, we have an opportunity to choose which voices we listen to. This activity is a way for youth to look at what kind of energies — positive or negative — influence their daily living and how these energies can be addressed.

In the Science of the Positive (SOTP), this activity falls under the domain of Spirit and relates to *Core Principle #3 — Be Perceptive*.

Perception is everything. What we perceive to be real is what we create in our lives and in the world. The way we perceive something solidifies it as real in our minds — whether or not it is an accurate reflection of what is really there. This is why perception is so important.

Duration

30 minutes

Goals

Participants will:

- Identify positive and negative influences in their daily lives



- Recognize that they can choose what influences them
- Learn to live positively

Materials

- Land and Sea handout
- Pens
- Science of the Positive (SOTP) Cycle of Transformation poster

Getting Ready

- Make copies of the Land and Sea handout.
- Display Cycle of Transformation poster where participants can see it.

Activity Part 1: Brainstorming the Elements

The first portion of the activity should take 20 minutes. Give participants the Land and Sea handout, along with a pen. Ask them to find a comfortable spot where they can think and draw on their paper.

Explain the activity, using your version of the instructions in bold below.

On the handout, you'll notice a line in the middle of the paper separating two arrows. The left arrow says Stand Firmly and the right arrow says Out to Sea. These arrows represent things that can influence your mood or your mindset. Positive events help you Stand Firmly on ground where can think clearly and rationally. Negative influences can cast you Out to Sea, where the water gets rough and you feel like you have no control.

Let's start with the left side, Stand Firmly. There are things, situations, and people that come into our lives every day and can help us Stand Firmly with our feet on the ground. Think of situations or people that positively impact your mood or decisions. Examples could include experiences that make you feel more like yourself, or individuals like a family member, teacher, coach, or a friend. It could even be an organization or a sports team that you are part of, or an activity that you enjoy.

Share an example of a time you personally experienced a positive influence in your life.

Working on your own, brainstorm positive people and situations which keep you Standing Firmly on the ground. You will have five minutes to fill in your handout, so be sure to take your time and think closely about the factors that positively support your mood and mindset.

Once everyone has completed the left side of the handout, bring the group back together and have each person share at least one Stand Firmly example with the group.

Next, let's look at the right side, Out to Sea. There are also situations or people that can negatively influence your mood and mindset. Try to think about which factors may be putting you Out to Sea. Some examples could be substance use, toxic friendships, a friend who spreads rumors or gossip, or spending too much time on social media.

Once everyone has completed the handout, bring the group back together and have each person share at least one Out to Sea example with the group.

Variations

You could run this activity as a youth group reflection by asking, "What situations, people, or outside influences positively or negatively affect our youth group?" or, "What situations, people or outside influences help our group Stand Firmly? Which ones take us Out to Sea?"

During the share out time, you could have the youth partner up and share with each other instead of with the whole group. This variation might help youth feel more comfortable about sharing.

Talk About It

Bring the full group together, in a circle if possible. Start the conversation with questions like:

- ***What side of the sheet, Land (positive influences) or Sea (negative influences) was easier to fill out? Why?***
- ***When you were thinking about the things that take you Out to Sea, what emotions or feelings came up?***
- ***What emotions or feelings came up while you were thinking about the things that help you Stand Firmly on the ground?***
- ***Do you think positive and negative influences have an impact on future choices? Why?***
- ***Are YOU someone's Land or someone's Sea?***

If time allows, bring up these additional ideas and share them with the group for discussion.

- ***Every great leader asks for help. Taking the time to recognize the positive or negative influences in our lives can help guide future choices and shape how to respond to challenging situations.***
- ***Noticing the day-to-day influences around us is like having a super power. When we reflect on these influences, we are being proactive. Keep the Land and Sea handout as a reminder of that growth mindset.***
- ***Remember to take the time to recognize when your mood or mindset quickly shifts: Why am I feeling this? Who or what is impacting me in***

- this way? Is this a positive factor, helping me to Stand Firmly? Or is this a negative factor, carrying me Out to Sea?***
- ***Knowledge is power! Only once we've recognized the positive and negative influences in our lives can we begin to make a real change.***

The Big Next

During the next week, be aware of the positive and negative influences that you encounter and how they affect your daily decisions. Consider how these decisions align with your short- and long-term goals.