



<http://www.resilientruralgirls.ca/>

Possible Selves Mapping Activity

Based on the work of Shepard, B., & Quressette, S. (2010).

Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves that we could become and are afraid of becoming
(Markus & Nurius, 1986 p.954)

***This activity is designed to be undertaken by facilitators experienced in working with youth and who feel comfortable addressing or referring on any difficult issues or conversations that may arise during the process.*

Background

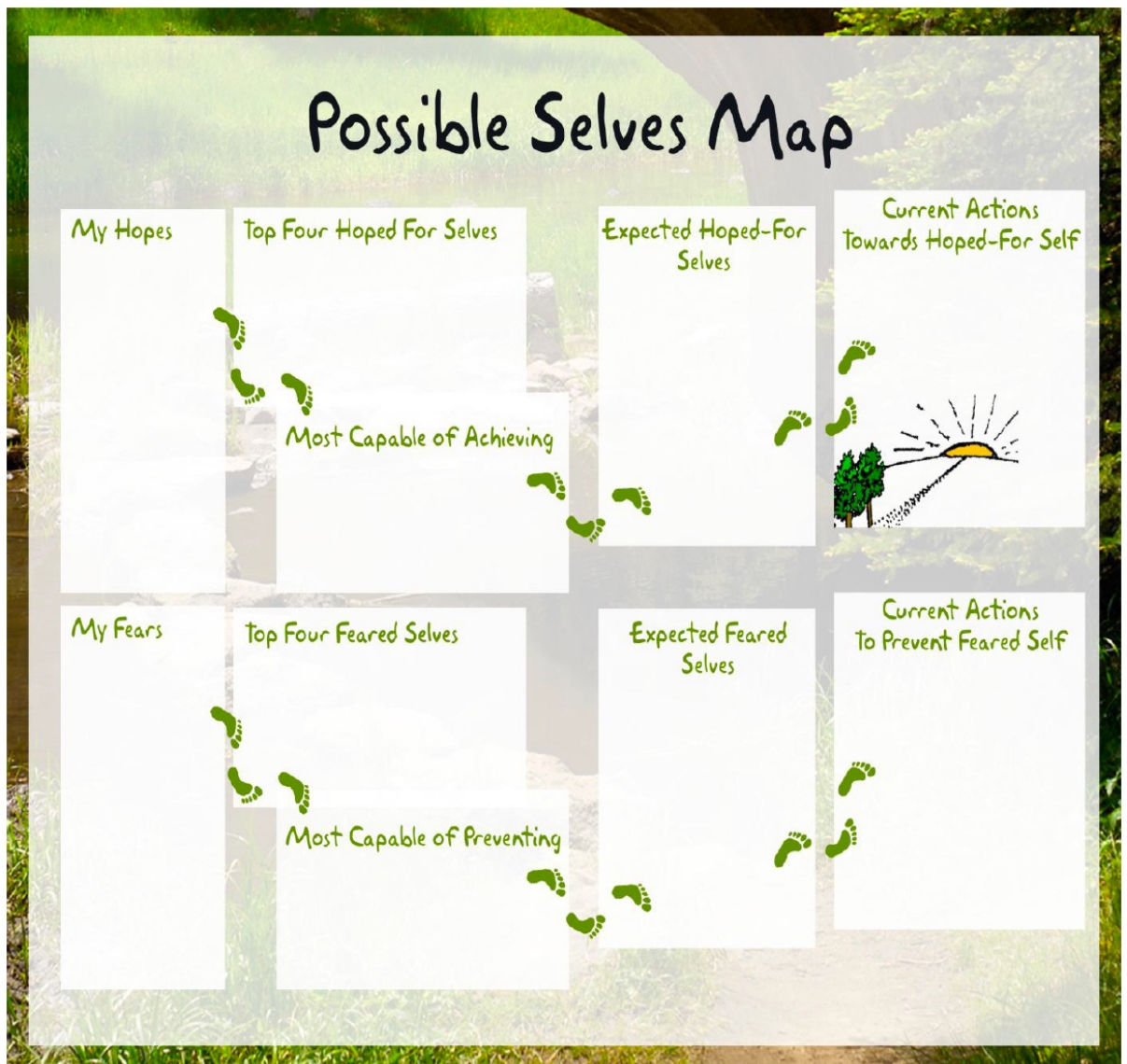
There are remarkably few opportunities for youth in their school experience or community life to engage in activities or exercises that prompt them to consider their possible future pathways. The PSM activity is intended to help youth consider new views of self within their current life contexts. In other words, imagine possibilities that may have been previously dormant or thought unattainable while also examining potential barriers. As Shepard and Quressette (2010) have noted in their research, “possible selves, then, can have a concrete impact on how people initiate and structure their actions, both in realizing positive possible selves and in preventing realization of negative possible selves” (p. 3).

Activity Outline

Participants in this activity can keep their responses private or depending on the group context, share their responses and discuss in pairs or with chosen peers.

1. Facilitate an open discussion with the youth group about how visioning our possible future connects to our current decision making, especially in terms of education and work. Invite the group to share how some visions of our “possible selves” may seem unlikely and others may be more likely.
2. Ask the participants to consider what kind of future they would like for themselves. Ask the youth participants to list on a green file card ,in point form, as many hoped-for selves as come to mind, placing one response on each card.
3. Now ask participants to think about their fears for the future, what they may want to avoid – their feared-selves. Ask them to list these feared-selves on yellow file cards, again one response per card.
4. Next have participants rank their hope-for and feared selves from most important to least important. Participants may want to elaborate in discussion with a peer on how they are deciding their ranking.
5. Participants will then choose their top 4 hoped- for selves (the ones they feel most capable of achieving) and top 4 feared- selves (the ones they feel most capable of preventing).
6. As a next step, the participants identify from their top 4 their ‘most capable of achieving’ self and their ‘most capable of preventing’ selves.

7. Participants then take some time to reflect and discuss with a peer, small group or on their own the necessary actions they have taken and would need to take now or in the next 6 months to contribute to or prevent their chosen possible selves. Examples of facilitator questions include: *What action can you take today to move in the direction of your hoped- for possible self? What action can you take today to move away from that feared-self?*
8. Participants then record the information gained from the Possible Selves Mapping activity on the map below to take with them as an ongoing reference and inspiration.



Shepard, B., & Quresette, S. (2010). *Possible selves mapping intervention: Rural women and beyond*. Retrieved from http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas10/Article_51.pdf