



UNFILTERED REFLECTION: The Voices and Stories from Gen Z

CALLING ALL TEEN WRITERS!

Would you be interested in using your experiences to submit a short essay that would help to shine a light on an aspect of teenagers' lives today?

Essay abstracts will be accepted until **October 23, 2023**.

Project Description

By collecting and sharing these essays, we hope to begin conversations about difficult topics, and erase stigmas that can sometimes be associated with many issues today's teens face. Through your essay you will be empowered to raise your voice and speak your truth.

Choosing a Topic

Possible topics for exploration include but are not limited to – social media use, depression, anxiety, beauty standards, loneliness, and mental health.

If you are looking for ideas or inspiration please view this short [documentary](#) created by a high school student for some ideas about possible topics.

Understanding the Prompt (Essay Length, Format, Style, and Voice)

Essays should contain two main components

1. Your experiences (What happened? What did you do about it?) (500 words max)
2. Action steps/Resources (What resources or strategies might help someone else experiencing what you did?) (250 words max)

The experiences you convey should be true and based on your life. They should be conveyed from your point of view. Please write in the first person, and use your authentic voice.

Expressing Interest

If you're interested, please consider sharing your interest [here](#)

Reviewing an Model

Please see the attached [exemplar](#)

Working with Your Mentor

Once you've chosen your topic, choose an adult mentor who will work with you on your journey of reflecting and writing. Your mentor could be a parent, family friend, teacher, neighbor, counselor, minister or any trusted adult. That person will be your supporter, co-author, and first reader. Together, you will work to create a clear and cohesive essay told with your voice and your style.

With you as the primary author, the adult mentor will act as your sounding board through the reflection, essay writing and resource selection process. They should support you at the level that you choose.

- Minimum mentor support requires that your mentor read your essay, provide feedback, and vet your resources.
- Maximum mentor support includes all the preceding points, as well as help along the way with revisions (proofreading) and tone.

Mentors are not permitted to do the work. It should be your voice on the page.

Walking Through the Process

Let's take an example and walk through the process. Imagine you were interested in writing about your experiences navigating society's unrealistic beauty standards. Your first step would be to think about a specific time when you've encountered these standards. Then, you would choose a mentor to work with you on the piece.

In terms of drafting your essay:

- The first section should explore your experiences - what you thought, felt, underwent, and came to understand. (What happened? How did you feel? What did you do about it?) (500 words max)
- The second section should contain resources and action steps. (What resources did you draw on during or after your experience? What resources would you recommend to others to manage that experience?) The resources could take any form including books, websites, support groups, advocacy groups, informational sites, journal prompts, inspiring quotes, coping skills, art, music, etc. (250 word max)

Publication Details

All essays selected for inclusion will be confidential. No one who reads the collection will be able to identify you. To ensure anonymity, your writing should include/reflect your personal experience, but should not contain any specific information that could be used to identify you or others.

Looking for More Information

For more information see our [FAQ](#) page or visit UnfilteredReflection.com for details.