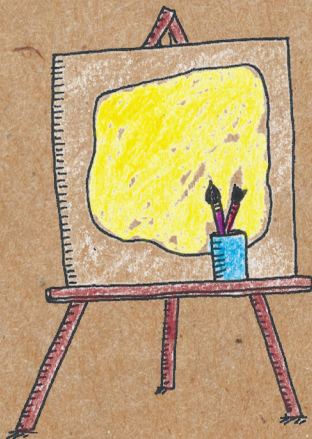


ELEMENTS for girls

A Fun & Engaging Self-Discovery Project



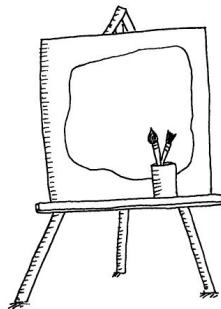
Mary Ellen Young & Sandra McDonnell



Bead #1 Uniquely Me

"Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of
a second-rate version of somebody else."

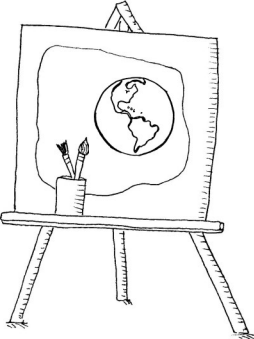
— Judy Garland (actress)



Bead #1

You are unique. There are seven billion people on Earth. SEVEN BILLION!! And yet, there is no other human exactly like you. Everything down to your fingerprints and the

microscopic DNA in your cells is uniquely yours. Isn't that incredible? You may see people who look similar to you or find a friend who is a lot like you, but no two people are exactly alike - not even identical twins. That is something to be celebrated!



Think about this: Some things like original art, precious stones or handmade items are more expensive because they are considered “one of a kind.” Some people go to great lengths to own something that nobody else owns. When it comes to people, though, we often are uncomfortable when someone is different or unique. Isn't that weird? You may see this in your school – students who are the most different may be the first to be excluded, teased or bullied. Each of us may be one in seven billion; but it's not easy to be different!

Our culture often doesn't encourage you to be unique. You may feel a lot of pressure to behave, dress and look like other girls your age. Developing friendships and “fitting in” is important. Friends can make the world a better place. But losing part of yourself in the process is no fun. What does it mean to “lose part of yourself?”



Can you think of anything about yourself that you tend to hide from friends or classmates out of fear they will make fun of you or not accept you?

Can you think of times you go along with the crowd even when you feel you shouldn't?

Do you look in the mirror and wish your hair, skin or body was different?

Before responding, take a few minutes to sit quietly and reflect on those questions.

Obstacles to Authenticity

The things you just reflected on are examples of ways we may lose pieces of our real or “authentic” self. These are obstacles to authenticity.

Let's explore this a little more. First, consider all the obstacles in the way of you feeling comfortable and confident with who you are. Read the ones we came up with and then add your own:

- ⇒ **Advertisements** that suggest you are not good enough or are flawed in some way (how else will they get you to buy their products?). Example: Is your hair frizzy? Try our shampoo to make it smooth and shiny!
- ⇒ **Television shows** about kids your age that don't seem realistic.
- ⇒ **Pressure from friends** to do things you don't want to do. Examples: Lie to your parents. Cheat on a test. Spread an untrue rumor about the new girl at school. Try things you don't want to do.
- ⇒ **Living in a neighborhood** or attending a school where you look, feel or dress differently than the majority.
- ⇒ **Pressure from friends** to dress or behave a certain way that doesn't feel right to you. Example: Friends insisting you wear make-up even though you don't want to.
- ⇒ **Constantly seeing images** of girls who have “perfect” bodies, hair, makeup, etc. and no matter how hard you try, you can't seem to get that look.

Now add your own:



Next, think about all the things you like about yourself ...

If you are having difficulty coming up with more than a few things, ask your parents, a sibling, a trusted friend, a relative or a teacher. It may be easier for other people to see your positive traits than it is for you to see them!



My personality _____

My abilities _____

My special talents _____

My sense of style _____

My friendships _____

My body _____

My study habits _____

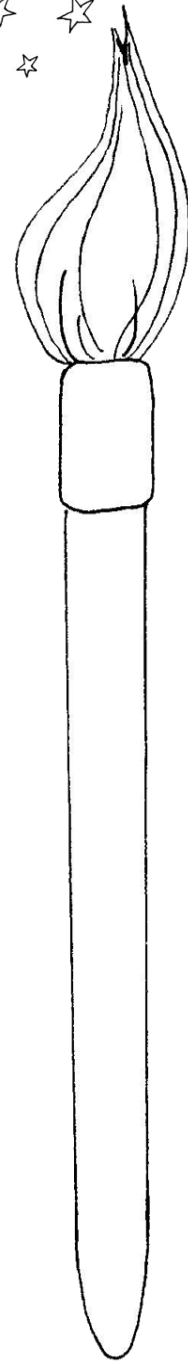
My priorities _____

How I take care of myself _____

How I care for others _____

How I handle conflict _____

How I make decisions _____



As you thought about the things you like

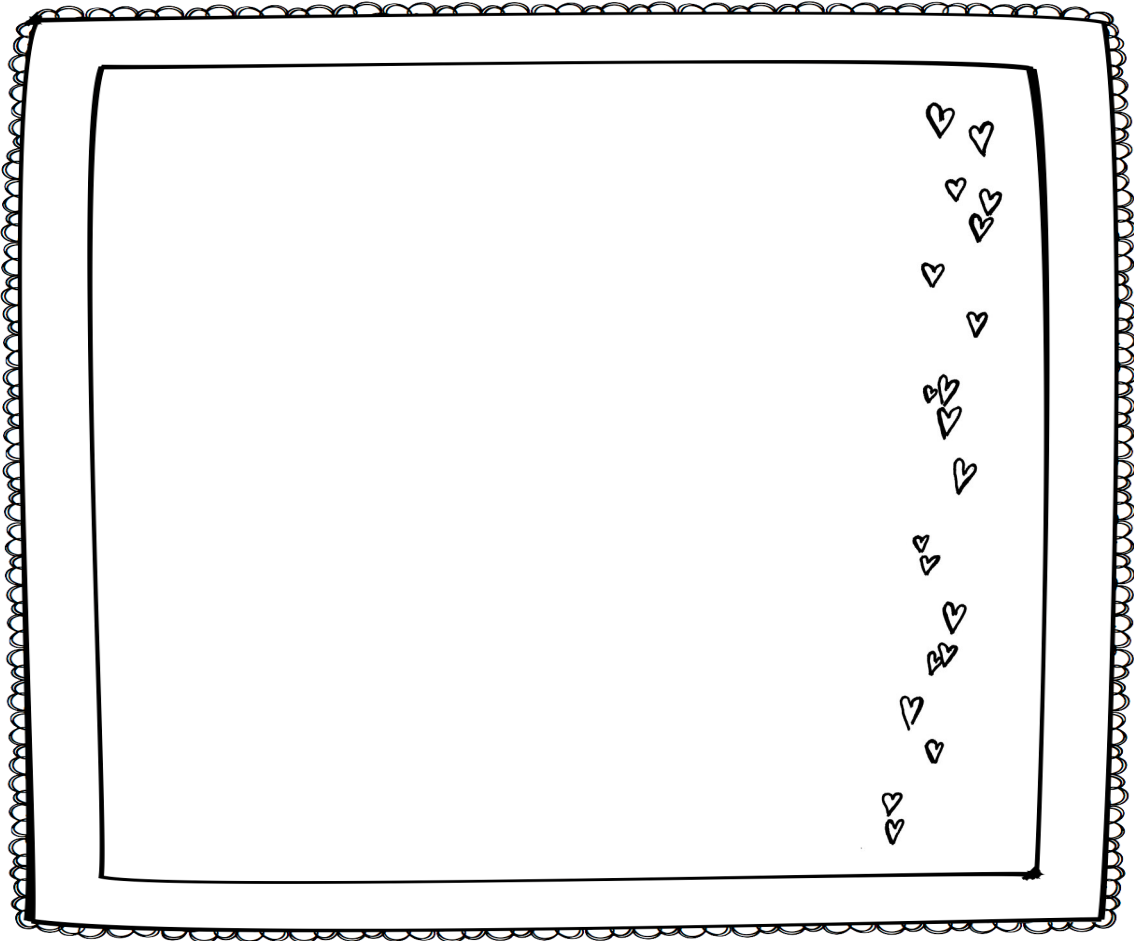
about yourself, were there any things that you don't like and would prefer to improve? For example, maybe at times you are bossy, impatient or not truthful. Or maybe you wish you could handle disagreements with your friends better, improve your study skills or take better care of yourself. Write or draw those ideas in the space below:

A large rectangular box with a thick, hatched border. In the bottom-left corner of the box, there are five stars of varying sizes, arranged in a cluster.

It is helpful to recognize our strengths and to be aware of areas we can improve or do better. This is part of a skill known as *self-awareness*, which is extremely important to develop. The journey of life will offer you many opportunities for personal growth and they often start with self-awareness. For now, be aware of these possible areas for personal growth because they may be helpful in future sections of this book (especially in the Goal Setting section). Also, know that it's not helpful to be self-critical.



There is a huge difference between being aware of areas you'd like to change or improve and being critical of these areas. It's also important to recognize the difference between things that can be changed and things that cannot (for example, you can work at being more truthful, but were born with your own unique, nose, eyes and hair - they are what makes you who you are!). So, embrace who you are and be kind and loving toward yourself. In the frame below, draw a picture of what being kind and loving to yourself might look like:



Think about some ways in which you are *different* from your closest friends. Jot them down here:



From: Mary Ellen

"When I was in 7th grade, my closest friend was short, not very athletic and had trendy clothes. I was tall, played a lot of sports and mostly wore hand-me-downs from my older sisters. Despite these differences, we were best friends for a long time!"



Think about a world in which all people are the same. Wouldn't that be B-O-R-I-N-G? **As unique individuals, we all have strengths and weaknesses.** These may include your personality traits (examples: being sensitive, funny, shy, confident, caring), special talents (can ride a skateboard, wiggle your ears, take care of animals, be a strong leader), musical or sports abilities, and many other things. Learning how to figure out what you do and do not enjoy, what you are good at, what is challenging, and what you care about or value will really help you in many ways. Every single person has unique strengths, weaknesses, talents, abilities and values. They are the colors of the rainbow that make up you. They are part of what makes you unique.

My Strengths and Weaknesses

Take some time to reflect before using words or drawings to complete these sentences.

I really enjoy spending time ...



I am especially talented at ...

My personality strengths include ...



The things I like about my body are ...

I am a good friend because ...



My strengths at school include ...




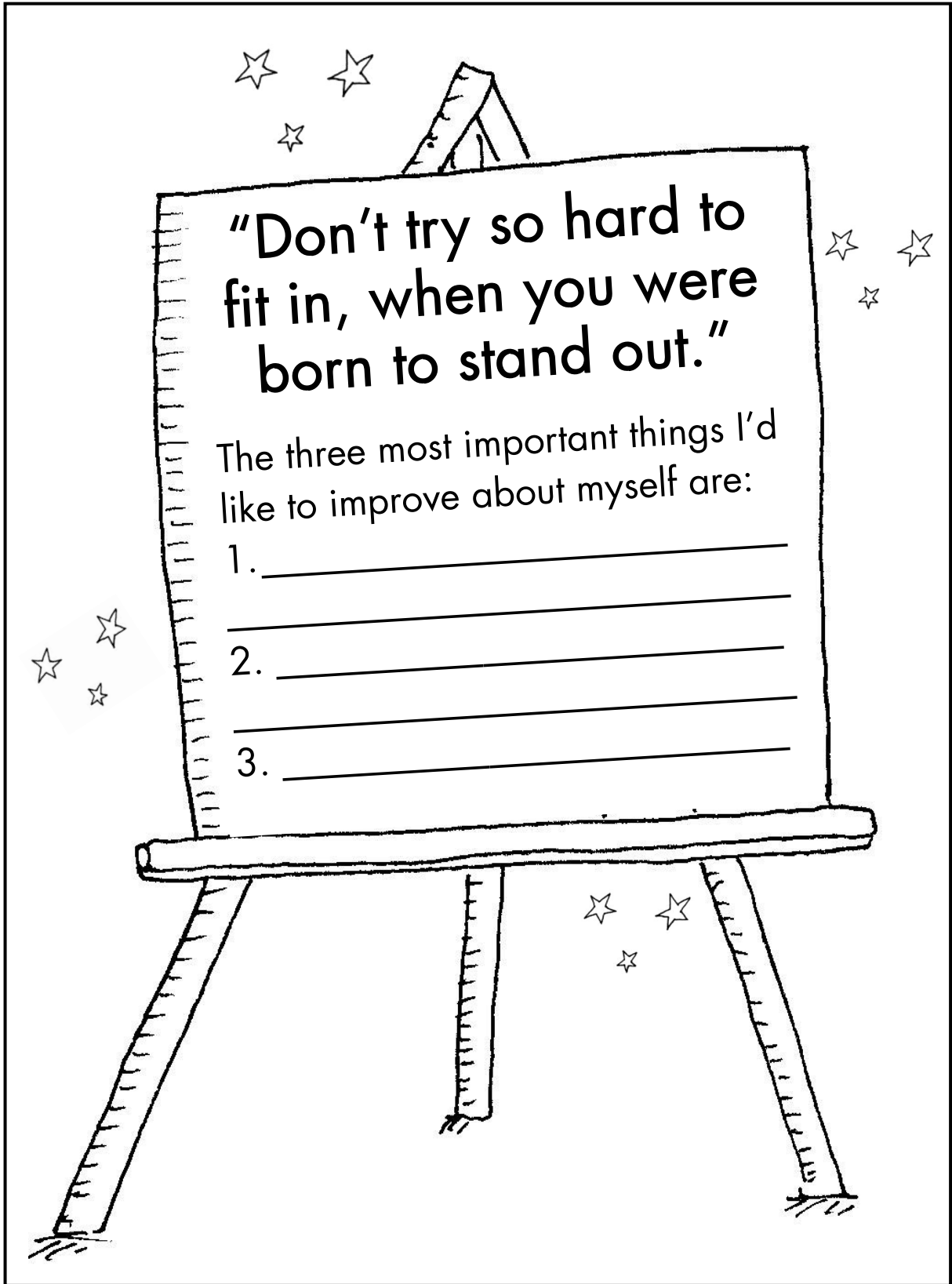
I show that I care for others by ...

I like my sense of style because ...

I feel happiest when ...

People tell me I'm good at ...



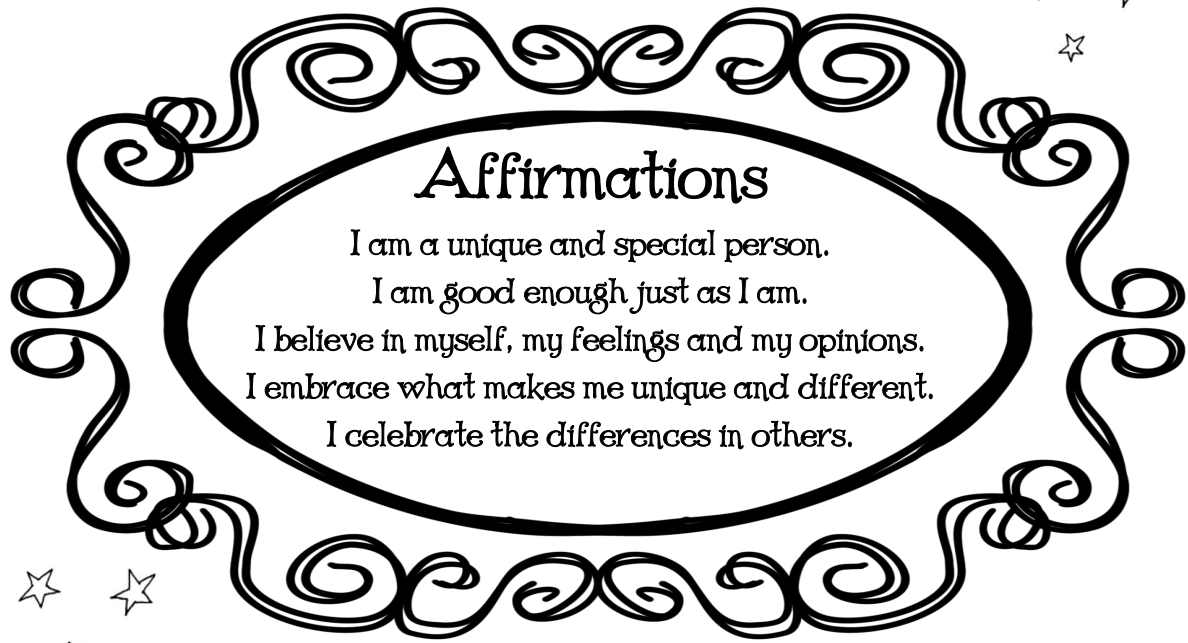


"Don't try so hard to fit in, when you were born to stand out."

The three most important things I'd like to improve about myself are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Affirmations are powerful, positive statements that can be read silently, spoken or sung aloud, and posted in your room. Affirmations are always written in the present tense stating something as though it already is a certain way, even if it may not be true for you ... yet! By regularly doing affirmations, you will replace your negative self-talk or inner chatter with positive ideas and concepts. Rather than just repeating your affirmations, try to really believe and feel they are true for you.



Affirmations

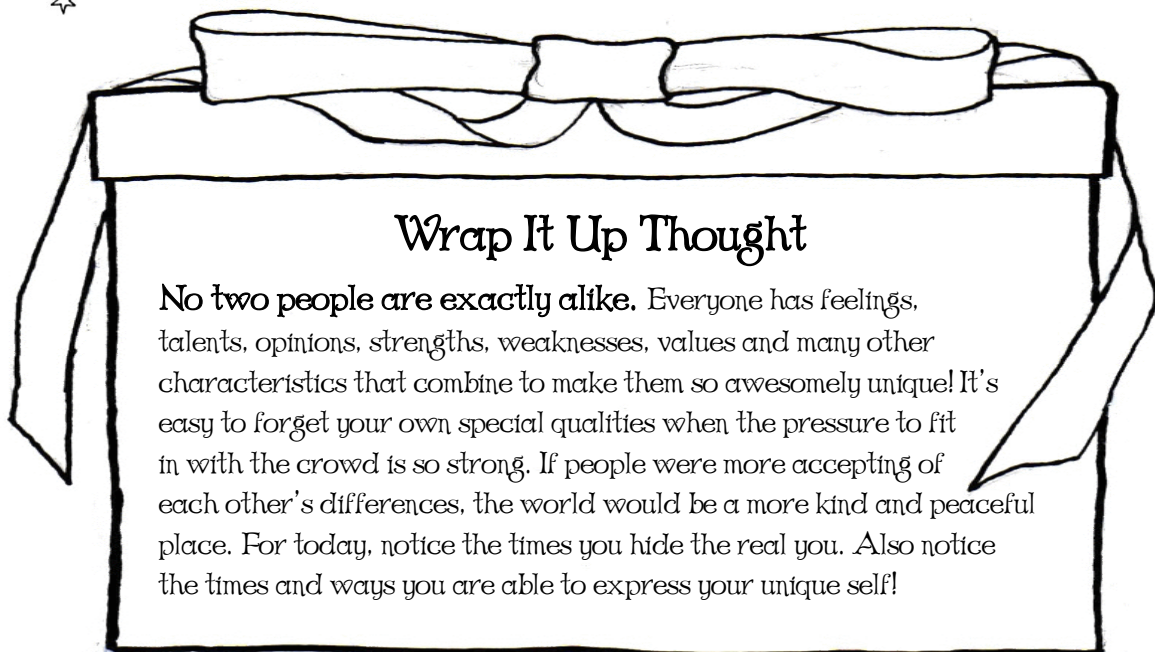
I am a unique and special person.

I am good enough just as I am.

I believe in myself, my feelings and my opinions.

I embrace what makes me unique and different.

I celebrate the differences in others.

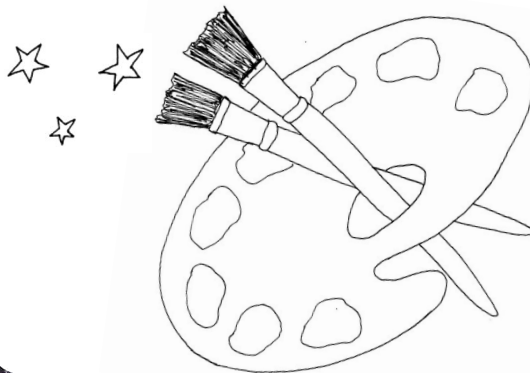


Wrap It Up Thought

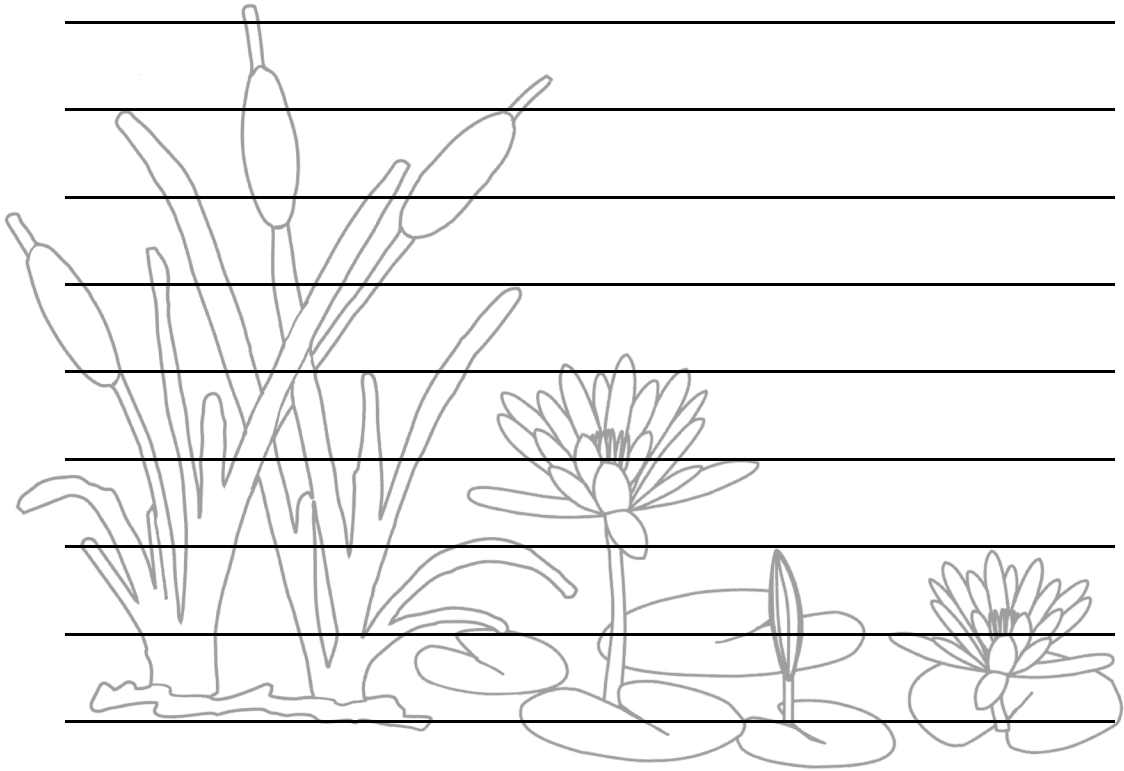
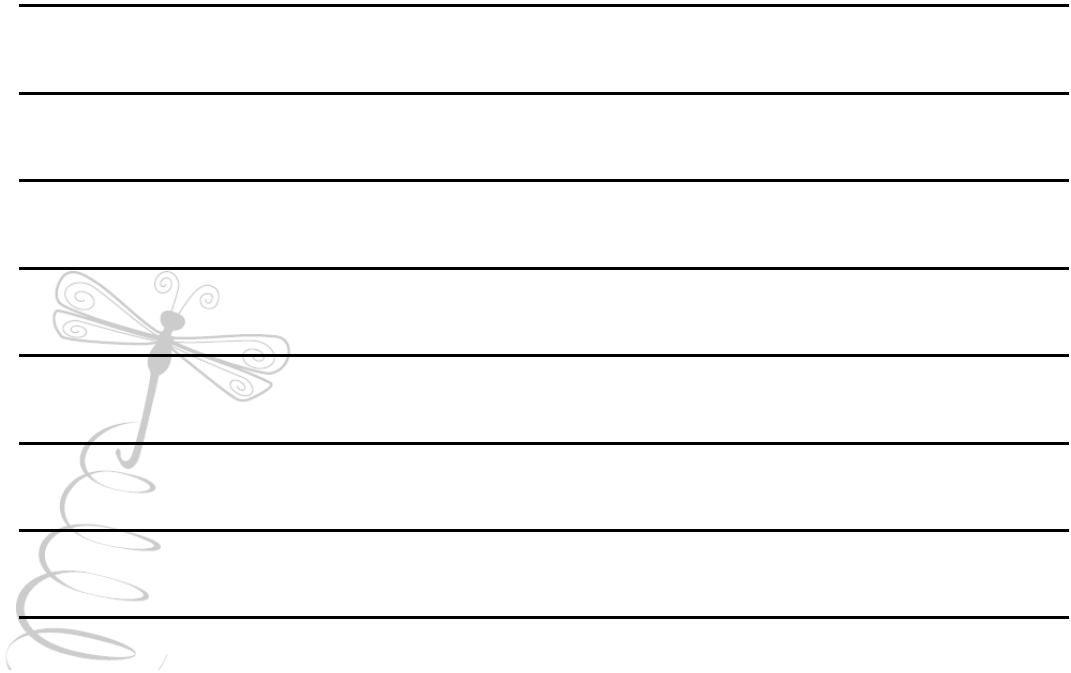
No two people are exactly alike. Everyone has feelings, talents, opinions, strengths, weaknesses, values and many other characteristics that combine to make them so awesomely unique! It's easy to forget your own special qualities when the pressure to fit in with the crowd is so strong. If people were more accepting of each other's differences, the world would be a more kind and peaceful place. For today, notice the times you hide the real you. Also notice the times and ways you are able to express your unique self!

Bead #1

For this first chapter, there is a rainbow-colored bead in your kit. This bead is a reminder that the combination of different colors of paint is what makes a work of art unique, and that the combination of different feelings, opinions, strengths and weaknesses is what makes you the one-of-a-kind work of art that you are.



explore, embrace, empower



explore, embrace, empower

