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Success Express for Teens: 50 Activities That Will Change Your Life

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Cynthia Burtch, illustrator
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Today's teens are empowered as never before with educational opportunities and life experiences, but they also face difficulties that their parents have never seen. Keeping teens on track and giving them the tools not only to be confident, but to act according to that confidence-being assertive rather than aggressive in seeking out their goals and dreams-is the subject of this practical guidebook for teens who want to maximize the best life has to offer.

The author, an award-winning teacher and media specialist, has developed workshops in self-esteem and writing, which he presents to school districts, state universities, and national education groups across the U.S., using this book as a platform.

Leslie uses the metaphor of a train trip to instruct his teen readers. He emphasizes that planning ahead while allowing room for spontaneity is a key factor in developing a successful life plan. Each chapter has a specific group of activities designed to explore a central concept. The author offers detailed instructions and his own personal experiences as examples. The book also includes worksheets with self-defined deadlines for completion. Sidebars with blue text give simple but useful suggestions and encouragement, such as "Be as loving to yourself as you are to others" and "If you're ready to speed ahead and life keeps cruising slowly, use that time to cultivate your dream."

Perhaps most importantly, the upbeat tone of the book does not deny the sometimes difficult realities of life, but instead reaffirms the advantages gained from facing adversity head-on and learning from it rather than becoming bitter.

The book's practical approach to a subjective subject will make it appealing even to skeptical teens. The worksheets provide an academic, hands-on feel to the topic, making it more accessible, particularly for teens who feel less able to discuss emotions and self-worth issues. The book may be viewed with some derision by teens who feel too sophisticated or too old for the subject matter, but many may secretly choose to use the book in private if it's left within their reach. The title and the train theme will work for some teens, but may be viewed as too young for others.

Regardless, this is a valuable tool for teens, by themselves or with their parents, to work through the difficult emotional teen years, hopefully arriving into their adulthood as strong, self-confident, and respectful human beings.
AMY REA (November / December 2003)

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