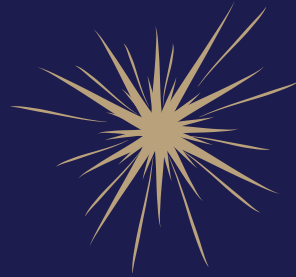


# SPARKS

An innovative character development program





**“It all begins with the spark to  
change the world around us..”**

The SPARKS program is an initiative of Gemmes, a non-profit organization whose mission is to help young people aged 12 to 24 to explore their potential and to contribute actively and positively to society.

More information on [www.gemmes.org](http://www.gemmes.org)

Version 4.1

# SPARKS

## in a few words



SPARKS is an innovative character development program.

It develops the **psychosocial skills and well-being of students as well as their identity as world citizens**. The program allows teachers to create a safe space for meaningful discussions among students, where participants reflect both on themselves and on their interactions with society. Through various workshop sessions, students start developing a more positive outlook on themselves, others and the world, which in turn generates the spark to engage in service projects and become **positive agents of change in the community**.

The SPARKS workshops are designed to be organized independently by schools or other organisations working with young people aged 12-18 through **educational kits**. Each kit consists of:

- ✦ **A short documentary** to launch the workshop (4-5 minutes),
- ✦ **A handbook for educators** to guide its implementation,
- ✦ **A training and follow-up support** for the facilitation of the workshops.

## THE OBJECTIVES OF SPARKS

- ✦ Inspire participants through stories of young people across the world, in order to widen their understanding of key social issues and of the potential of youth to address them.
- ✦ Create a safe space for open and constructive conversations amongst youth, where they can practice active listening and further develop a sense of belonging to the group.
- ✦ Open the minds of participants to diverse social and cultural realities.
- ✦ Help youth become more aware of their capabilities as individuals and as a group and of the various ways in which they can have a positive impact on society.
- ✦ Assist participants to take concrete steps for the betterment of their communities.



# Short documentaries



## 1 SERIES

SPARKS includes a series of short documentaries (four to five minutes) about lives of inspiring young people around the world. Each episode highlights the personal transformation experienced by a young person during a time of crisis and how they became agents of change for their community.

## 5 CONTINENTS

The SPARKS episodes are being filmed in five countries by five female directors.

## 10 STORIES

The series tells the stories of ten young people, from different social settings, backgrounds and cultures, who have all decided to contribute, in their own way, to a better world. Each episode deals with a different theme.



## IMPACT

Each SPARKS workshop begins with watching an episode that will allow discussion to flourish. The positive emotions created by the video become a source of inspiration, and encourage youth to act, within their own circumstances, for the common good.

# Handbooks and trainings



Each SPARKS episode is accompanied by a handbook for educators.

## USERS

The handbooks have been developed for teachers working with young people between 12 and 18.

## CONTENT

Each handbook is developed around two main concepts or values connected to the video in the kit. The content is designed to generate personal and collective reflections, both on societal themes and on the positive impact that each individual can have. Several tools are used to stimulate these reflections: questions, role plays, games, group projects, etc.

The themes of the first four handbooks are:

- \* **Empathy & Responsibility** (see p. 9)
- \* **Social Justice & Solidarity** (see p. 11)
- \* **Identity & Inclusion** (see p. 13)
- \* **Resilience & Collaboration** (see p. 15)

Upcoming themes in 2024: service, interdependence, moderation.



## FORMAT

One handbook allows a minimum of four hours of workshop time and up to more than ten hours. It is designed to be easily adaptable to the time available to the workshop facilitator and can be split into several sessions.

Throughout the kit, specific guidance is provided to help set up the workshops and suggest some key ideas to bring out. As a bonus, suggestions have been added to transform certain activities into long-term service projects.

## TRAINING

The SPARKS program begins with a training session for the teachers. The training includes both support on the content of the handbook as well as how to create the most conducive environment for a successful SPARKS workshop (posture of the facilitator, psychological safety, etc).



## PRICE

SPARKS is made available to schools under a license agreement with Gemmes. The price of the program depends on the number of trainers and number of students.

## Testimonies from teachers



“

“These tools bring a lot of meaning to our vocational high school students, and it’s a concrete and innovative tool for their teachers.”

“

“I found the training very rewarding, and it gave me all the tools to facilitate SPARKS workshops. The SPARKS handbook is self-explanatory, with appealing visuals. Everything is provided to us to be able to take action!”

“

“Everyone was able to talk and participate during the session, much more than in a regular class session. (...) One of our students, who is having a hard time in class and has a complicated family background, kept raising his hand and wanting to share and participate. It was really moving.”



“

“Clearly SPARKS could be a mainstay, it’s a goldmine, when you see the impact it can have on our young people; then we want to go further...”





“

“I was surprised by the students’ ability to take to the workshop like that. I thought it was going to take time, but in the end it was as if they were just waiting for it: to have their say!”

“

“We facilitated yesterday with two different classes, it was great, the kids were super happy.”

“

“Running these workshops with our students is also a way of participating in a successful educational relationship: developing mutual trust gives students the security they need to develop in a positive climate. It’s a prerequisite for developing a sense of belonging to their class, to their school. It’s a strong support against school drop-out!”

“

“These group activities help to develop autonomy, encourage involvement in joint work, mutual support and cooperation. They develop and restore self-esteem and a sense of connection, which are seriously lacking in our vocational high school students. It’s a real personal development tool for every young person.”





## → STORY OF ALIENOR



ALIENOR (23)

Alienor was born in France but grew up all over the world: Maldives, Morocco, England, Peru, Canada, Malaysia. She then lived between Lille in France and The Hague in the Netherlands before moving to Spain and to Switzerland.

On March 14, 2020, when a rumor announced a forthcoming lockdown all over France, she was with her five cousins in Lille, along with her four brothers and sisters. Their uncle, who works in a nursing home, told them that isolation was likely to be more deadly for the elderly than the virus itself.

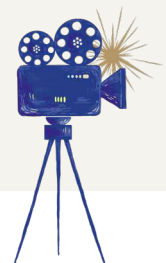
“Our generation really has a share of responsibility. Politicians aren’t the only ones who need to act. It is up to us to get moving and find the solutions for the future.”

For Alienor, *“It was a real wake-up call”*. The 10 cousins decided to take action. They imagined a website to allow anyone who wished to do so to write to isolated elderly people in nursing homes. The site, called *“One letter, one smile”*, was created and launched on social media within two days and three nights. On the day of the launch, 1,000 people wrote. Afterwards, they received 1,000 letters per day for the duration of the lockdown. After 5 months, the 10 cousins had sent 600,000 letters to 1,300 nursing homes, in seven different countries.

This family adventure had several consequences for Alienor. She became aware that in 2020 *“It was still possible to*

*do enormous things with very little means, with just motivation and a motivated team”*. She also realized that knowing how to make a website and manage computer data had made her feel useful. Even though she had previously decided to stop her studies, she finally decided to continue: *“In IT too, you can choose to have a positive impact on our society, and that’s really what I want to do with my future degree”*. For Alienor, it is up to her generation to take things in their hands:

*“Our generation really has a share of responsibility. Politicians aren’t the only ones who need to act. It is up to us to get moving and find the solutions for the future.”*





# → HANDBOOK SUMMARY

## **EMPATHY (p. 5-12)**



- Raise awareness on the importance and benefits of empathy
- Encourage the use of empathy

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect to and express emotions</li> <li>- Create links between the episode and our personal history</li> </ul>
2. Understand the notion of empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define empathy and identify it in a situation</li> </ul>
3. Feel the importance of empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broaden our vision and understanding of some key social issues</li> <li>- Understand the role of empathy in addressing these issues to increase the desire to practice empathy</li> <li>- Understand that empathy is one of the levers that drives action and commitment</li> </ul>
4. Practice empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn how to become more empathetic</li> </ul>

## **RESPONSIBILITY (p. 14-18)**



- Raise awareness on the potential for action of every youth
- Reconcile oneself with the notion of responsibility

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect with what drives us</li> </ul>
2. Understand the notion of responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Express and accept our feelings</li> <li>- Understand the notion of responsibility differently or in a more holistic manner</li> </ul>
3. Act for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand that change already starts with small actions</li> <li>- Create the desire and the ability to act, both individually and collectively.</li> <li>- Strengthen the unity of the group</li> </ul>

# Kit Social justice & Solidarity



## → STORY OF LEO



LEO (17)

Leo is from Bushwick, an underserved neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, where he lives with his dad and sister. He attends Food and Finance High School, where his academic classes are taught alongside cooking and business courses. His dream is to be a food critic one day. Growing up in Bushwick, he noticed the disparity of wealth in his neighborhood, resulting in many of its residents being affected by food injustice, environmental racism and childhood poverty. During COVID-19, these issues became even more prevalent and began to increasingly affect Leo.

“ I knew it was time to be that support system. ”

*“Financially, COVID-19 hit me and my family hard. Right when the pandemic started, my dad’s hours were cut dramatically. The virus was affecting poor people of color at an overwhelming amount. We were seeing it firsthand. Despite my dad’s short hours, he still showed up every day at work, and I made sure to have food prepared for him by the time he came back - even if it was at 4 am.”*

During this time of hardship, Leo experienced an internal transformation and became progressively aware of his own growth, capacity and confidence. His form of coping with the crisis was to expand his concern beyond his immediate family and be of selfless service to others. Even though his family had been struggling financially since the coronavirus crisis, Leo was determined to help others in need whenever he could.

*“I knew it was time to be that support system for my friends. That doesn’t invalidate everything*

*you may be going through, but sometimes you must put it aside and help in any way you can. I owe it to my neighborhood to do good.”*

From then on, Leo made community work the central point of all his activities. For example, during the pandemic, he started organizing a group to donate clothes, toiletries, protective masks and food to people in need. He also lead seminars, workshops and created social media platforms and content to raise awareness about food injustice and sustainability.

The seeds of his actions are already bearing fruit with the younger teens at his school - they feel inspired by him and follow his path. Leo is determined to continue serving his community. *“I take charge of every opportunity that comes my way as long as we are setting precedent for change.”*



# → HANDBOOK SUMMARY

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE (p. 5-15)**

- Become aware of existing social injustices in society
- Develop and enhance our sense of justice

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect to and express our feelings</li> <li>- Discover drawing as a means of self-expression and connect with one's creativity</li> <li>- Create an atmosphere of sharing and develop group cohesion</li> </ul>
2. Connect with injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify the basic needs to be met in order to live with dignity as a human being</li> <li>- Experience and name the feeling of injustice</li> </ul>
3. Identify social injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be able to recognize a situation of social injustice</li> <li>- Identify the different forms of social injustice that exist in society</li> <li>- Learn to debate and express one's opinions</li> </ul>
4. Better define justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broaden understanding of the notion of justice</li> <li>- Improve questioning to make the right decisions</li> </ul>

## **SOLIDARITY (p. 16-22)**

- Feel the importance of solidarity and develop the desire to act
- Feel legitimate and capable to act
- Identify the resources and the means to become an active agent of change

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reconnect with the theme of social justice</li> <li>- Remind ourselves of the key concepts discussed in the previous workshop</li> </ul>
2. Analyze the links between justice and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Become aware of the positive impact of justice in society</li> <li>- Understand the obstacles and tools in the quest for social justice</li> <li>- Become aware of our impact as a citizen in building a fairer society</li> </ul>
3. Defining solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better understanding of the value of solidarity</li> </ul>
4. Imagine oneself as an actor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Question the notions of legitimacy and capacity linked to the act of solidarity</li> <li>- Feel legitimate and capable of helping, become aware of one's strengths and resources</li> <li>- No longer perceive a lack of privilege as a limitation</li> </ul>
5. Become an actor in solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and be inspired by acts of solidarity around us</li> <li>- Make a concrete commitment to solidarity</li> </ul>

# Kit Identity & Inclusion



## → STORY OF EWURAKUA



EWURAKUA (22)

Ewurakua has always expressed herself through writing. Whether through her poetry or scripts, she is a believer in stories. As a student of NYU's film school, Ewurakua soon noticed the lack of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) filmmakers. She was frustrated about the lack of representation of BIPOC in the media. She also noticed that BIPOC actors were generally cast into highly stereotypical roles.

“ *When you're sitting in tomorrow take a moment to remember the girl who once lived in your yesterday's dreaming of you. – Poem by Ewurakua* ”

*“I know that I am entering an industry that was not created for my success, and that is fine. Because I truly believe that the way to achieve constant positive portrayals of black women is for black filmmakers to be unapologetic in our storytelling and to continue to make these films. We are reclaiming our stories and putting them on the big screen.”*

Her frustration grew when she saw what felt to her like a superficial treatment by the media of the tragic events in 2020, such as the death of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other.

*“It felt like disingenuous activism to post a black square on a Tuesday and then continuing on with life the next day. Our media was picking and choosing when and where people of color were being seen. I wanted to change that.”*

It was during the George Floyd riots that a sense of urgency sparked Ewurakua to create the Melacast Network along with two co-founders. Melacast is a dual casting agency and production company that supports BIPOC talent and creates opportunities and resources to tell culturally rich stories in film. It is a community for BIPOC creatives to collaborate and support each other. *“What keeps me hopeful is that people can be united and come together quickly. People have the ability to be empathetic.”* In November 2020, Ewurakua was able to shoot her own film. She looks forward to what the future holds for Melacast.



# → HANDBOOK SUMMARY

## IDENTITY (p. 7-23)

- Question and better understand the concept of identity
- Understand that identity is evolving and that I can choose the person I become
- Develop a better awareness of myself and my relationship with others

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	- Connect to and express our feelings
2. The construction of identity	- Understand that my identity is a multi-faceted concept and that I am a combination of very diverse elements - Understand that my identity is evolving - Identify the most important identity traits, in order to change my relationship to identity - Identify what influences my identity construction, and start to be aware of my own role in this construction
3. My identity, a choice	- Understand that I am constructed in the interaction with the other without being defined by them - Become aware of the impact of my beliefs and behaviors on my identity, on that of others, and on that of my environment - Understand that I construct my identity through the way I choose to respond to situations and events in my life
4. Our common identity	- Become aware of what I have in common with others - Become aware of what connects me deeply to other people through the concepts of 'humanity' and 'interdependence' - Bring the question of 'Who am I?' closer to the question of 'What is the meaning of my existence?'
5. My identity aspirations	- Project myself into the 'best version of myself' - Move from inspiration to concrete action

## INCLUSION (p. 24-41)

- Become aware of the importance of inclusion for one's own well-being and that of society
- Redefine the concept of inclusion and understand that it starts with the way I look at and consider the other
- Identify attitudes that promote inclusion and ask ourselves questions at our level

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	- Introduce the notion of inclusion
2. Unity in diversity	- Understand the benefits of 'unity in diversity' and the need for inclusion - Be aware of the barriers to inclusion and consider solutions - Understand that inclusion starts with how I perceive the other
3. Becoming more active	- Become aware of my own limiting beliefs and non-inclusive behaviours - Transfer my reflections and understandings on inclusion into my reality and become more proactive

# Kit Resilience & Collaboration



## → STORY OF SAIF



SAIF (25)

Saif lives in Delhi and his passion is rugby - an unconventional choice in a cricket-crazy country. But he is equally passionate, if not more, in using the sport as a medium of change in society.

He grew up being well aware of the socio-economic disparity around him and facing its repercussions as a schoolboy – being bullied, fat-shamed and made to feel like an outsider. And later, in retaliation, turning into a bully himself. Conflicted by his own personality and surroundings he found an easy escape in substance abuse. But all this was in a past that he has left far behind. Getting into rugby was the biggest turning point of his life – one that gave him a new direction to transform personally and triggered his journey as a change-maker.

*“ I changed myself. That was the first change I ever made. You can't bring about a change in your world, unless it first happens within yourself. ”*

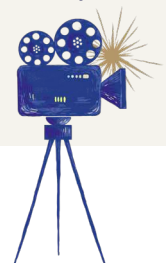
Saif applies the learning and insights of the sport into the rehabilitation of those who, like him are survivors of social disorganisation, or are from underprivileged communities. In his own words, he uses the 'Pause. Restart. Reform.' approach.

Some of his team members or co-players are survivors of child abuse and drug addiction, rag pickers, and former members of local gangs. Many of them are now state-level rugby players, community leaders, advocates of peace and much more. In 2020, when playgrounds were shut due to the pandemic, his team was restless. He then decided to utilize the spirit of the sport outside the field. Saif, along with his team, came up with plans to distribute free ration and sanitization supplies to communities under economic distress brought by the pandemic. In 2021, as the second wave of Covid-19 hit the country, their work expanded to supplying oxygen cylinders to patients and

hospitals in need, within and outside Delhi. Then they continued their work across villages in North India by spreading awareness on Covid-19 and the disease related protocols to follow.

*“We realised that as a team, we already had the capacity and human resource. If we can't utilize that during a national crisis, we would render the spirit of sportsmanship useless.”*

Saif currently works as a Rugby Development & CSR Manager at the Indian Rugby Football Union. Saif drives his endeavors towards *“creating a force of active peace and change makers who, through a ripple effect of transformation, can build a nurturing support system for everyone. And when needed, the community comes together to fight issues and calamities like Covid-19 to safeguard society.”*



# → HANDBOOK SUMMARY

## RESILIENCE (p. 6-23)

- Understand and integrate the notion of resilience
- Debunk false beliefs
- Identify the components of resilience in order to develop it in one's own life

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Express and share feelings</li> <li>- Name the concept of resilience</li> </ul>
2. Discover the concept of resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand the concept of resilience</li> <li>- Understand how the way we look at and react to events can impact our lives</li> </ul>
3. Deepen our understanding of resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broaden our understanding of the concept of resilience</li> <li>- Debunk the myths associated with the concept of resilience</li> </ul>
4. Develop resilience in my life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Become aware of the resources we have, within and around us, to help us become more resilient</li> <li>- Become aware of one's possibility and capacity to learn and benefit from each experience</li> <li>- Stimulate our learning capacity</li> <li>- Identify the elements needed to develop resilience</li> </ul>
5. Collective resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand the notion of collective resilience</li> <li>- Create a transition with the Collaboration workshop</li> </ul>

## COLLABORATION (p. 24-31)

- Raise awareness of the need for and benefits of collaboration
- Identify the essential components of collaboration
- Understand that collaboration starts with a state of mind

Main sections	Objectives
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observe the impact of collaboration at different scales</li> </ul>
2. Understand the concept of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feel and understand the value of collaboration</li> <li>- Name difficulties or fears related to collaboration</li> <li>- Identify the elements that enable collaboration</li> </ul>
3. Develop a collaborative spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practice introspection: identify strengths and areas of improvement in order to collaborate</li> <li>- Integrate and clarify the definition of collaboration</li> <li>- Practice collaboration and integrate understanding through artistic expression</li> </ul>

SPARKS   
ACTING FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

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**Website:** [www.gemmes.org/kits-sparks](http://www.gemmes.org/kits-sparks)

**Contact us at:** [contact@gemmes.org](mailto:contact@gemmes.org)