

THE UNSHAKEN LIFE METHOD™

IDENTITY & LEADERSHIP

Grades 9–12 · An 8-Week Facilitator Guide

Building confidence, voice, and leadership — through the full lens of Identity → Clarity → Effort

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Program Overview

Identity & Leadership is an 8-week in-person program that combines the two foundations high school students need most: a genuine sense of who they are, and the practical skills to lead and communicate from that foundation.

Rather than teaching identity and leadership as two separate tracks, this program pairs one Identity Path practice with one complementary leadership skill each week — so students immediately apply what they're learning about themselves to how they speak, listen, and lead.

This program represents the full arc of The Unshaken Life Method™ — Identity, Clarity, and Effort — delivered as a single, integrated high school experience.

Program Purpose

To support students in developing:

- a clear, authentic sense of identity beneath roles, labels, and external expectations
- a genuine, confident speaking and leadership voice built on that identity
- practical tools for listening, presenting, managing conflict, and recovering from mistakes
- resilience and consistency that carry into college, career, and community leadership

Why This Matters

High school students are forming their adult identity while simultaneously being asked to lead — in clubs, teams, group projects, and future workplaces — often without ever being taught that the two are connected.

Without intentional support, capable students can:

- perform a version of themselves rather than leading from who they actually are
- equate leadership with dominance or being the most impressive voice in the room
- avoid speaking up, presenting, or taking on leadership roles out of fear of imperfection
- struggle to stay consistent or collaborative once real disagreement or pressure appears

This program treats identity and leadership as one continuous skill, not two separate units.

Program Framework: Identity → Clarity → Effort

- Weeks 1–3 (Identity): Self-knowledge, stillness, and self-compassion as the foundation of an authentic voice
- Weeks 4–5 (Clarity): Trust and letting go as the foundation of confident, non-performative leadership
- Weeks 6–8 (Effort): Consistency and openness as the foundation of leadership that lasts, culminating in a real showcase

Weekly Session Plans

WEEK 1 — Know Yourself, Find Your Voice

Identity State: Self-Knowledge | Leadership Skill: Authentic Voice

Learning Objectives

- Students separate who they are from the version of themselves they perform for others
- Students connect that self-knowledge directly to what an authentic speaking voice sounds like

Warm-Up (10 min)

Quick round: one word for how everyone's feeling as the session starts.

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion and journaling: "How different is the version of you online or in a group from the version of you when no one's watching?" Students write three things true about them that have nothing to do with how others perceive them.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: you can't lead with a voice that isn't actually yours. A performed voice is exhausting to maintain and hard for others to trust.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

Each student delivers a 60-second unscripted answer to "something I care about and why," practicing sounding like themselves rather than being polished.

Closing Reflection (5 min)

One word: how did it feel to speak without performing?

Take-Home Connection

Notice one moment this week where you speak differently depending on who's listening.

WEEK 2 — The Power of the Pause

Identity State: Stillness | Leadership Skill: Active Listening & Leading Discussion

Learning Objectives

- Students practice pausing before reacting
- Students connect that pause to the skill of truly listening and facilitating discussion

Warm-Up (10 min)

Box breathing together: in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4.

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion: the spiral of reacting immediately to a text, comment, or conflict — and how a pause changes what happens next.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: the same pause that stops a hasty reaction is what makes space for someone else's voice in a conversation.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

In small groups, one student facilitates a 5-minute discussion on a simple prompt, practicing open questions and building on others' answers rather than just waiting to speak.

Closing Reflection (5 min)

What's one thing you noticed about your own listening today?

Take-Home Connection

Practice pausing for a full breath before responding to something that stings this week.

WEEK 3 — Kindness Under Pressure

Identity State: Self-Compassion | Leadership Skill: Recovering From Mistakes While Speaking

Learning Objectives

- Students practice replacing self-critical thoughts with self-compassion
- Students connect that self-compassion to recovering gracefully from a mistake while speaking

Warm-Up (10 min)

Recap: how did the pause practice go this week?

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion and journaling: what's the harshest thing you say to yourself after a mistake? Would you say that to a friend? Rewrite it in a kinder, equally true voice.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: how you talk to yourself after a stumble is exactly what determines whether you keep going in front of others.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

"Oops, and...": practice making a small deliberate mistake mid-sentence and recovering smoothly, with humour rather than embarrassment.

Closing Reflection (5 min)

What's one thing that made recovering from the "mistake" easier than expected?

Take-Home Connection

Notice one moment this week you can respond to your own mistake with the same grace you'd offer a friend.

WEEK 4 — Trusting Yourself in the Spotlight

Identity State: Trust | Leadership Skill: Presenting With Confidence

Learning Objectives

- Students practice trusting themselves without needing certainty of the outcome
- Students apply that trust directly to presenting with confidence

Warm-Up (10 min)

Quick round: one thing you're not sure will go well, but want to try anyway.

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion: the difference between needing certainty and trusting yourself to handle whatever happens.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: confidence in front of a room isn't knowing it'll go perfectly — it's trusting yourself to handle it either way.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

Each student delivers a 90-second impromptu pitch on a topic they care about, using a simple structure (hook → point → evidence or story → close).

Closing Reflection (5 min)

What helped you feel steadier, even without knowing exactly how it would go?

Take-Home Connection

Identify one upcoming moment where you can choose trust over needing a guaranteed outcome.

WEEK 5 — Leading Without Needing to Win

Identity State: Letting Go | Leadership Skill: Leadership Without Needing to Be the Loudest

Learning Objectives

- Students practice releasing comparison and the need for external validation
- Students connect that release to a more genuine, less performative style of leadership

Warm-Up (10 min)

Quick round: how did last week's impromptu pitch feel afterward?

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion: the exhausting game of comparing your real life to someone else's highlight reel, and what it costs to constantly need to be the most impressive person in the room.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: releasing the need for validation frees you to lead from genuine conviction instead of a need to be seen as the best.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

Small-group exercise: each student identifies a leadership moment where they felt they had to "perform" leadership, and reframes what leading from genuine conviction would have looked like instead.

Closing Reflection (5 min)

What's one comparison you can let go of this week?

Take-Home Connection

Notice one moment this week you can lead or contribute without needing to be the most impressive voice.

WEEK 6 — Showing Up When It's Hard

Identity State: Consistency | Leadership Skill: Managing Conflict & Collaboration

Learning Objectives

- Students practice showing up consistently, especially when motivation or ease is absent
- Students apply that consistency to staying collaborative through disagreement

Warm-Up (10 min)

Quick round: one small win from a group project or team situation this week.

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion: the difference between showing up when it's easy and showing up when motivation runs out — and how identity ("I am someone who follows through") sustains consistency better than willpower alone.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: consistency isn't just showing up when things are easy — it's staying engaged and respectful especially when there's friction or disagreement.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

Role-play in pairs: practice giving specific, kind feedback on a low-stakes mock scenario, then switch roles. Keep scenarios clearly fictional to avoid surfacing real interpersonal conflict.

Closing Reflection (5 min)

What's one value you want to stay consistent with, even when it's inconvenient?

Take-Home Connection

Choose one small commitment to follow through on this week, with a plan for the day you don't feel like it.

WEEK 7 — Open to What's Next

Identity State: Openness | Leadership Skill: Leadership in Action / Looking Ahead

Learning Objectives

- Students practice sitting with uncertainty about their own future without needing it resolved
- Students connect that openness to stepping into real leadership opportunities ahead

Warm-Up (10 min)

Look back across six weeks: which practice has felt most useful so far?

Identity Activity (20 min)

Discussion: graduation, college, career, changing relationships — the years ahead are full of unknowns, and openness means welcoming that rather than needing it all figured out now.

The Bridge (10 min)

Discuss: the same openness that lets you welcome an uncertain future is what prepares you to step into leadership roles you haven't tried yet.

Leadership Activity (15 min)

Each student identifies one real, near-future opportunity to lead (a club, a team, a job, a project) and names one skill from this program they plan to bring to it.

Closing Reflection (5 min)

What's one thing you're open to becoming that you weren't sure about eight weeks ago?

Take-Home Connection

Prepare for next week's Showcase: finalize a short presentation or leadership moment to share.

WEEK 8 — Showcase & Celebration

Identity State: — | Leadership Skill: Full Application

Learning Objectives

- Students apply the full program in a real presentation or leadership moment
- The group celebrates growth and courage across the full eight weeks, not just polish

Warm-Up (10 min)

Brief group breathing reset before the showcase begins.

Showcase (35 min)

Each student presents a short talk, project, or leadership moment (2–3 minutes) to an audience of peers and, where possible, family or community members. A brief audience Q&A follows each presentation.

Closing Reflection (10 min)

Group reflection circle: "What's one moment from these eight weeks you're proud of?" Followed by certificate presentation to each student.

Take-Home Connection

Program complete. Consider connecting graduating students to Returning to Who You Are™ or other Unshaken offerings as they move toward adulthood.

Student Outcomes

By the end of this program, students will be able to:

- describe who they are independent of external roles, labels, or performance
- use stillness and self-compassion as tools for both emotional regulation and better listening
- present and speak with confidence rooted in trust, not certainty
- lead without needing to be the most dominant or impressive voice in the room
- stay consistent and collaborative through real disagreement
- approach an uncertain future with openness rather than anxiety

Impact for Techwillow, Schools & Families

- Gives high schools a single, comprehensive program rather than requiring two separate bookings for identity work and leadership training
- Creates a built-in Showcase — a strong engagement and referral moment for families and the wider school community
- Prepares graduating students with skills directly relevant to college interviews, applications, and early career leadership
- Delivers the complete Identity → Clarity → Effort arc of The Unshaken Life Method™ as one continuous experience, reinforcing the same framework used across all I AM Unshaken and Techwillow offerings

Implementation Options

Option 1 — Full 8-Week Series (recommended)

One session per week, 60–75 minutes, culminating in a live Showcase. Ideal as a semester-long offering, advisory period program, or leadership elective.

Option 2 — Condensed 4-Week Intensive

Weeks combined (1+2, 3+4, 5+6, 7+8) for a shorter commitment; best suited to short terms or intersession programming.

Option 3 — Start with I AM Unshaken — Youth Edition

Many schools begin with the I AM Unshaken — Youth Edition, a 60-minute introductory workshop covering the same seven Identity Path practices explored in this program. It's an easy first step for a school or board not yet ready for an 8-week commitment — and for schools that want to go further, Identity & Leadership is the natural next step, applying those same seven practices to real leadership and communication skills over a full semester.

Custom packages available for bundling with existing Techwillow coding or leadership offerings.

Delivered Through Techwillow

This program is offered as part of Techwillow's well-being and leadership program portfolio. Techwillow is an Ontario-based education company and an approved vendor on Ontario school board procurement and supplier lists, giving schools and boards a single, pre-approved partner for both technology and well-being programming.

Facilitated by Elizabeth Ainsworth, Architect of The Unshaken Life Method™.

Learn more or book at studio.techwillow.ca

About the Facilitator

Elizabeth Ainsworth

Author | Speaker | Creator of The Unshaken Life Method™

With over 20 years of leadership experience, Elizabeth Ainsworth develops transformational frameworks that support identity, resilience, and intentional living. This program extends that work into a complete identity and leadership journey for the next generation of confident young leaders.