

## Outline Coming of Age Program Path from Ethical Culture New York City

1. **Humanity:** Ground your group (or individual) process with ethical agreements, humanist principles, and values-based practices to bring out the best in one another, and thereby ourselves. Touch upon Humanist principles, applicable to people of all life-affirming worldviews. Practices of compassion, gratitude, and respect will guide our work throughout the journey.
2. **Personal Worldviews:** Where are we coming from: ancestry, family values, and holiday practices, heroes and aspirations, inventory on personal vision? Sometimes this work can get very deep and philosophical. Here is one young person's path, witnessed:

<https://draft.blogger.com/blog/post/edit/3319016049746991561/6584049488663483602>

Note: The first part of this course can also be helpful in this process: "Taking Stock"

3. **Mentorship:** In dialogue with one's family, it is important to engage a mentor to supportively witness youth through their journey. This can become a person whom your child can choose to speak to about things they might be too inhibited speaking to parents about. Similar to the importance of "guide parents" in a naming/welcoming ceremony, mentors make a commitment to love and support the child, but they also provide guidance in an educational process. A mentor can be a wise and caring adult from an extended family, circle of friends, or congregation—agree upon by the parent and the child, and when relevant, advised by a congregational leaders.
4. **Heroes and Inspiration:** We will learn together and teach one another about people who have done great works for the betterment of humanity, growing the mountain of awareness about whose shoulders we stand upon.
5. **Cross-cultural/Interfaith Study of Cosmologies:** This is a great time to study ways that the world is understood by different people throughout history, religion and culture. It helps us humanize others, respect differences, and grow beyond tribalism. It cultivates curiosity and worldly literacy. There are amazing resources for this study, including magnificent books, and several field trips to diverse spaces of worship and practices of contemplation. The book "Four Corners of the Sky" by NYC Folklorist Steve Zeitlin is among many great resources one may draw upon.
6. **Wellness and Communication Skills:** We will do workshops that integrate healthy relationship building, expressive practices (theater/movement), compassionate development, identity development, and empathetic relationship, self-defense (saying no to things that can be harmful), environmental and personal well-being. We will challenge oppressions, injustice, judgements, and stereotypes.
7. **Deed and Service:** Global awareness and action. Coming of Age is a great time to explore the value of DEED collectively and individually, as it can be practiced on a daily level and as it can be organized on a community level. By choosing a project that contributes positively to one's world, we awaken our capacity to create an impact. An important

aspect of a Coming of Age experience is community service. Some examples include: volunteering at a food pantry, child care center, homeless shelter, park; participating in social justice events; tutoring younger students, etc.

8. **Leadership:** Take leadership in a Coming of Age project. Lead others to participate in it, understand it, and augment it. Doing this can demonstrate how we are all teammates in support of each other's projects, and the betterment of our shared world. It is a first experience where a COE (child of ethics) becomes a CEO (Chief executive officer)!
9. **Ceremony/Celebrations:** Some people call this Stepping Up ceremony. Sharing one's overall journey with a larger community of family and friends is a youth rite of passage. The ceremony creates a way to articulate hopes/plans for the future. It can include: children and adults, public speech and/or private letters, even a community call and response. The ceremony invites forth a presentation by youth in written, musical, artistic forms of exploration: a commitment statement by youth, mentor, and parents; festivities of music, dance and refreshments—all in recognition of a new phase of life, a kind of graduating from youth.