

be your best self

National BYBS Week
April 20-24, 2026



2026 Participant Handbook

an outreach program of





Overview

In 1987, Distinguished Young Women developed and launched the Be Your Best Self (BYBS) program as the organization's national outreach aimed at encouraging boys and girls all over the country to lead successful and productive lives. Through the BYBS program, Distinguished Young Women seeks to give program participants at the local, state and national level a means to make a positive and lasting impact on the world around them.

Five Elements of the BYBS Program

The five elements of the BYBS program are at the heart of the Distinguished Young Women philosophy, and the program helps to instill those values in others. Be healthy, be involved, be studious, be ambitious, and be responsible are the five elements that help define what it truly means to Be Your Best Self. In spreading the BYBS message to young people, we encourage them to choose to personally implement it into their own lives.

Be Healthy

Care for your physical and mental health

Be Involved

Serve your community

Be Studious

Stay in school and be a lifelong learner

Be Ambitious

Set and achieve goals

Be Responsible

Live by moral and ethical principles



National Be Your Best Self Week

The 2026 National BYBS Week will take place April 20-24. Distinguished Young Women participants across the country will give presentations to groups of boys and girls in their communities, sharing the BYBS program in fun and creative ways on any or all of the days during the week.

Participant Role for National BYBS Week

As a participant in the Distinguished Young Women program, you play an important role in National BYBS Week. By reaching out to a group of children in your community and presenting the BYBS message, you are enriching the lives of young people, serving as a role model and enhancing community relationships. Presentations can be completed in-person or virtually!



Tips for BYBS Presentations

While this handbook provides guidelines for your presentation, many participants have used this program as an avenue for creating programs and year-long activities in their communities. Think BIG and be creative! Listed below are some brief tips to help you in creating your BYBS presentation:

- **Consider your audience.** Determine the age range of the children to whom you will be presenting in order to develop an age-appropriate presentation.
- **Allow for interaction.** Children respond much better to an activity that engages them in learning as opposed to a traditional lecture type presentation.
- **Develop a game or other exciting activity** that allows the kids to get up and “play” while learning about the BYBS program.
- **Utilize the BYBS Pledge Card** that kids can keep as a reminder to be their best selves. The card is located at the end of this handbook (print front and back!).
- **Provide rewards and/or “treats.”** Children love being rewarded for answering a question correctly or for their participation. Plan to give out some sort of treat or an item that the children can keep.

Planning and Preparing for a Successful National BYBS Week

Step 1: Initial contact

Make initial contact to introduce the event to the group to which you would like to present. Determine who your point of contact will be and provide that person with general information about Distinguished Young Women and the BYBS program, if they are not already familiar. Make sure to ask about any rules or preferences that the group or organization may have concerning guest speakers and activities. It is strongly preferred that presentations be made to an audience of both boys and girls.

Step 2: Confirm date and details

Find out which day(s) during National BYBS Week works best for you and the group(s) you have selected. Finalize the date and time and begin making any specific arrangements for the event. For your safety, an adult chaperone is required to attend the presentation with you.

Step 3: Photo releases

Ask your contact person for permission to take photos during your presentation and provide them with the Photography Release Form found in this handbook to distribute to students. Discuss with your contact person that these photos will be shared on social media sites and utilized by Distinguished Young Women National Headquarters.

Step 4: Prepare your presentation

In planning your presentation, think big and be creative! Remember that you will be entertaining children and you will need to keep their attention in order to spread the message of BYBS.

Step 5: Celebrate National BYBS Week!

Post items (photos, links, status updates, etc.) on Facebook, Instagram, etc., announcing that it is National BYBS Week. Be sure to tag Distinguished Young Women (@distinguishedyw) in all of your posts and link back to our website whenever possible. Use the hashtags #BYBS2026 and #DYW in all of your posts. Utilize any other social media platforms to generate “buzz” about National BYBS Week.



Documenting National BYBS Week

In order to showcase the positive impact of National BYBS Week and to increase awareness of Distinguished Young Women, it is important to capture both high-resolution photos and video footage of your presentation(s) during the week.

It is required that ALL children appearing in photos from your National BYBS presentation obtain consent from their parent or guardian for the photos to be used by Distinguished Young Women for publicity purposes. ONLY children whose parent or guardian has completed a Photography Release Form should be included in photographs of your presentation.

A Photography Release Form is provided for you on the last page of this handbook. You may make copies of this form and provide it to the contact person for the group to which you will be making the presentation. Each child who will attend your presentation should receive a release form to be completed by their parent or guardian and returned prior to your presentation. Releases should be collected and submitted to National Headquarters by mail or you may email them to BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org no later than May 15, 2026.

Photos

We would like for you to capture a group photo with the children either holding their pledge cards or participating in any other activity you may have had for them. You should be in the group photo as well. You should also take a variety of shots such as candid shots of the kids interacting with you, individual shots of you and kids, etc.

No more than 5 photos should be submitted to National Headquarters.

Submitting Photos to Distinguished Young Women

Submit your photos to Distinguished Young Women Headquarters no later than May 15, 2026. You may submit your materials in one of the following ways:

Send files as attachments in an email:

BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org

Send files by creating a folder through a file transfer service and sharing access with BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org (recommended for large files):

[Drive.Google.com](https://drive.google.com)

[Dropbox.com](https://dropbox.com)



2026 Distinguished Outreach Award

Your participation in National BYBS Week qualifies you to be considered for selection as the 2026 Distinguished Outreach Award recipient, a \$1,000 scholarship opportunity that is available to you as a participant in any Distinguished Young Women program (local, at-large or state level, excluding state winners). Class of 2027 participants are able to participate now for the following year.

The winner of the Distinguished Outreach Award will be announced at National Finals in June 2026 in Mobile, AL. Participants must fulfill ALL requirements listed below to be considered for the Distinguished Outreach Award.

- Complete a BYBS presentation(s) either in-person or virtually with a group of children during National BYBS Week (April 20-24). It is strongly preferred that presentations be made to an audience of both boys and girls.
- Write a two-page report describing your BYBS presentation and experience. The report should be in essay format. A participant's submission may not exceed two pages, and photos should NOT be included directly in the report. The report is not limited to the National BYBS Week presentation(s) and should include any and all BYBS activities, presentations or projects in which the participant has been involved.
- Submit your best five photos from your presentations as separate attachments -NOT in the body of your essay document- via email, Google Drive, or Dropbox.
- Submit all required materials no later than May 15, 2026, to BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org
 - two page report labeled with name, program & program year
 - five photos
 - National BYBS Week Presentation Evaluation Form

Important Dates to Remember

April 20-24, 2026

National Be Your Best Self Week. Celebrate and talk about the BYBS program on social media sites.

May 15, 2026

Deadline to submit your two-page essay, photos, and evaluation form to BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org.

Have Questions? Contact us!

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have about the Be Your Best Self program or National Be Your Best Self Week.

Valerie Mothershed
Operations Director
Office: 251-438-3621
BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org

**This handbook, along with all of the documents, forms and resources mentioned can also be found online at DistinguishedYW.org/Be-Your-Best-Self under the Outreach Award section.*



National BYBS Week Presentation Evaluation Form

Participant Name: _____

Program Name & Year: _____

High School: _____

Expected Year of Graduation: _____

Presentation Location (elementary school, Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, etc.):

Presentation Location Address: _____

Date & time of presentation: _____

Summarize the presentation: _____

How many participants attended the presentation: _____

of boys: _____ # of girls: _____ Age range: _____

Ethnicities represented (please circle):

Hispanic/Latino American	Indian/Alaska Native	Asian
Black/African American	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	White

Please list any TV stations, newspapers or other media outlets in your area: (this will help us ensure your local media is notified of your presentation if a press release is sent)

Note: Participants may make presentations to multiple groups.

Please complete a separate form for each presentation.

*Please return this form via mail, email, or fax no later than May 15, 2026.

Distinguished Young Women

751 Government Street, Mobile AL 36602

Email: (participants) BYBS@DistinguishedYW.org

or (state reps) Valerie@DistinguishedYW.org



Photography Release for Minor Child or Children

I hereby authorize Distinguished Young Women, hereafter referred to as “DYW,” to publish photographs taken during National Be Your Best Self Week, April 20-24, 2026, of myself and/or the minor child or children listed below, and our names and likenesses, for use in the DYW print, online and video-based marketing materials, as well as other DYW publications.

I hereby release and hold harmless DYW from any reasonable expectation of privacy or confidentiality for myself and for the minor child and children listed below associated with the images specified above. Further, I attest that I am the parent or legal guardian of the child or children listed below and that I have full authority to consent and authorize DYW to use their likenesses and names.

I further acknowledge that participation is voluntary and that neither I, the minor child, or minor children will receive financial compensation of any type associated with the taking or publication of these photographs or participation in Organization marketing materials or other Organization publications. I acknowledge and agree that publication of said photos confers no rights of ownership or royalties whatsoever.

I hereby release DYW, its contractors, its employees and any third parties involved in the creation or publication of Organization publications, from liability for any claims by me or any third party in connection with my participation or the participation of the minor children listed below.

Authorization:

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Relationship to Children: _____

Names and Ages of Minor Children:

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____



The Five Be's - Definitions & Examples

To make your presentations relatable and easy to comprehend, switch up your examples depending on the age of the kids you're speaking with!



Be healthy.

Care for your physical and mental health

Examples: move your body / talk about how you're feeling / get plenty of sleep

Be involved.

Serve your community

Examples: join clubs and organizations / be a good teammate / volunteer in your neighborhood



Be studious.

Stay in school and be a lifelong learner

Examples: complete assignments on-time / explore museums / join a study group

Be ambitious.

Set and achieve goals

Examples: try out new hobbies / set long-term and short-term goals / dream big



Be responsible.

Live by moral and ethical principles

Examples: hold yourself accountable / recycle / be a good friend

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I can be my best self by:

Be healthy

Be involved

Be studious

Be ambitious

Be responsible

I, _____, pledge to be my best self by implementing each of the elements of the Be Your Best Self Program into my own life.

_____ (sign here)

_____ (date here)

I can be my best self by:

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