Workbook

Course on Initiating
Youth Engagement Practice in Mental Health Centres

Openings & Possibilities

THE NEW MENTALITY
DISABLE THE LABEL

Broadening & Strengthening:
A Course on Initiating Youth Engagement in Mental Health Centres

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Cathy Dyer & Nancy Pereira
The New Mentality

Cover art:

Chris Mcquigge of the New Mentality Group at Pathways for Children and Youth created the cover art, "A New Generation, a More Accepting Population, Starting the Minds Recreation". It celebrates youth & mental health.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (The Centre) has a mandate to strengthen the use of evidence-based practices within the mental health sector. Youth Engagement is one evidence-informed practice the Centre supports because engaged young people are powerful tools for improving therapeutic outcomes and increasing organizational growth. Toward this aim, The Centre hired The New Mentality to develop a two workshops on Youth Engagement, a beginners course, Openings & Possibilities, and an advanced seminar, Broadening & Strengthening.

Project Managers & Advisor:

The project managers who gave shape to this training program are Catherine Dyer (The New Mentality), Nancy Pereira (The New Mentality) & Erin Smith (The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health). Simon Davidson (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Commission of Canada) also provided ongoing leadership and advice.

Steering Committee:

These Steering Committee members provided valuable insights and expertise: Mwanaisha Ali (youth), Andrei Biltan (youth), Rita Gidillini (Windsor Regional Children's Centre), Michelle Moran (East Metro Youth Services), & Jessica Ripley (Youth Net)

Key Informants:

The New Mentality interviewed mental health professionals to understand what they need in order to operate within a Youth Engagement model. The following individuals participated in an interview:

- Brenda Allard (Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa)
- Karen Anslow (Peel Children's Centre)
- Erin Boudreau (Children's Mental Health Ontario)
- Diane Broad (Griffin Centre Mental Health Services)
- Lisa Cluett (New Path Youth and Family Services)
- Angela Culham (Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth)
- Cathy Dandy (Kinark Child and Family Services)
- Tammy Halliday (Pathways for Children and Youth)
- Karen Ingebrigtson (Patricia Centre for Children and Youth)
- Kevin Kapler (Child & Youth Wellness Centre of Leeds & Grenville)
- Kelly Lazure (Lynwood Hall Child & Family Centre)
- Gregory Lubimiv (Renfrew County Youth Services/ Phoenix Centre)
- Megan Petingalo (Algoma Family Services)
- Mary Shirley-Thompson (Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interactive and intensive course has been carefully crafted to address the specific needs of mental health agencies, and will present professionals with practical strategies and tools for initiating youth engagement practice into the work that they do.

The purpose of this beginners training workshop is not only to introduce theories and principles of Youth Engagement, but also to reduce the anxieties of professionals to work alongside youth in roles that extend beyond the traditional client-service provider relationship.

Through reflection, problem-solving, visioning, and planning, participants will become armed with strategies to implement effective Youth Engagement practices within their agency.

Who Should Attend

This is a beginners course designed for a mental health agency serving youth. In order for an agency to adopt Youth Engagement staff at all levels (i.e., front-line workers, management, board members, etc.) must be trained on the principles and practices. No more than 30 staff from one mental health agency should attend.

Training Outcomes

By the end of this workshop, you will:

- know the **benefits & outcomes** that youth engagement brings to youth, adult allies, organizations and the overall community;

- understand **how to assess the capacity** of your agency to engage youth;

- Understand the **rights and risks** associated with youth engagement, and identify solutions for overcoming potential barriers;

- **craft a plan** to help make your agency 'youth-friendly'; and

- explore effective **recruitment & retention** strategies to encourage youth to want to become engaged with your agency.

"The Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter is a new practice of democracy that we really need in the world now."

- Phil Cass, CEO, Columbus Medical Association, and Foundation, Ohio, USA

"The art of hosting is a practice that heals the broken relationships between people."

- EU Commission official

Seminar Approach

This seminar uses activities from The Art of Hosting & Harvesting Conversations that Matter. [i] The Art of Hosting teaches that:

Conversations Matter- It is common sense to bring more people together in conversation. It is the way we have done it in generations past, gathering round fires and sitting in circles. Conversation is the way we think and make meaning together. It builds strong relationships that invite real collaboration.

Meaningful Conversations Lead to Wise Actions - Human beings who are involved and invited to work together only pay attention to that which is meaningful to them. Conversations that surface a shared clarity on issues of importance foster ownership and responsibility that leads to action. Actions that come out of collective clarity are sustainable.

The Art of Hosting is an approach used to create a container in which groups of people are safe to:

- learn to be together in the best possible way

- remember and speak about the knowledge and experience they hold

- appreciate that being afraid is part of the journey and so gain the courage to travel through the fear

- be together in an authentic way

The Art of Hosting uses several activities, which include:

The Circle- The first and most basic will be the Circle. A circle is a place where youth, adults and facilitators are equals. No one is higher or lower and everyone respects the voices of the others.

Open Space Technology[ii]- Open Space Technology is a process originally designed by Harrison Owen that allows leadership and the agenda structure to emerge from the participants.

World Café- The World Cafe is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations.

Mind Mapping[iii]- A collective mind-map is a quick and simple way to create a shared overview of issues and opportunities relevant to a particular subject or challenge.

Head, Heart, and Feet[iv] - "Head, Heart, Feet" is a very useful model for listening and observing and includes some ideas on the helps and hindrances to effective listening. We need to listen to thoughts, to feelings and to intentions to act.

SECTION 1. WELCOMING NEW PRACTICE

WHAT IS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND WHY WOULD I PRACTICE IT?

Purpose:

The purpose of this section of the course is to:

- Expand your knowledge of Youth Engagement

- Trust you know how to manage risks for initiating Youth Engagement

Individual Reflection- Youth-Adult Partnerships[v]			
Personal Statement	**Working on it**	**Mostly**	**Always**
I consider the feelings and ideas of young people and adults equally			
I realize that it is more effective for youth to develop their personal beliefs from their own experiences rather than simply following the advice of the adults in their lives			
I am able to hold back when I have the urge to tell youth what to do.			
I understand how 'adultism' can influence adult attitudes towards young people & I change my own behaviour.			
I am aware of the current issues facing young people today.			
I try to look for the root causes in a young person's behaviour or mood.			
I believe that youth have what it takes to make a difference in their communities.			
I listen with an open mind to people of all ages and value their opinions.			
Within my workplace, I try to create opportunities for youth to get involved beyond receiving service.			
I find it easy to establish a positive rapport with young people.			
I say something when youth are being disrespected or when their rights are being violated or denied.			
I look for the strengths in young people and consider them to be valuable assets, rather than problems that need fixing.			

Discovering What You Already Know
WHAT ANXIETIES DO I HAVE ABOUT STARTING?

Purpose: To create a collective understanding of the purpose, importance & impact of Youth Engagement practice. Participants are encouraged to openly express their personal thoughts (positive/negative) towards Youth Engagement practice. This activity is a series of small group discussions to allow for the collaboration of participant ideas, insights, and emerging thremes.

In the space below, harvest the learning from your group discussions.

Record your learning:

Listening for the Head - the Thinking Level - to thoughts, facts, concepts, arguments, ideas and the principles behind these. "What did I think?"

Listening for the Heart - the Feeling Level - to feelings, emotions, mood, experience and the values behind these. "What did I feel?"

Listening for the Feet - the Will Level - to intentions, energy, direction, motivation, the will. "What do I intend to do?"
How can it be achieved?

Youth Engagement Definition

The term Youth Engagement is an emerging practice that does not possess a universal definition. The New Mentality defines Youth Engagement as, "empowering all youth as valued partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important."[vi] The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement defines Youth Engagement as the "meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person, in an activity with focus outside of him or herself. [vii]

What It Is

- Youth-adult partnerships (working relationships)

- Shared decision-making

- Involvement of youth in the design, planning and implementation of programs

- Youth perspectives being valued and regarded as credible

- Youth and adults assuming the dual role of teacher and learner

What It Is Not

- Service provider/client relationship (treatment)

- Adults asking youth to offer a vote of approval on decisions that have already been made

- Youth attendance in a program that was planned solely by adults

- Youth perspectives, knowledge and experience filtered through adult interpretation

- Adults mentoring youth

The Risks & Rights Involved

WHAT DO WE RISK BY ENGAGING YOUTH?

Youth engagement theory and practice has been in existence for over 20 years, but it is a relatively new way of doing business for mental health professionals. The shift in working with youth as clients, to engaging them as decision makers, can at times seem overwhelming. Youth Engagement practice can introduce feelings of anxiety among many due to an uncertainty around expectations, what to do, and how to get started.

The first lesson in youth engagement is that there is no magic formula. Youth involvement will look and feel different depending on an agency's location, capacity, and the youth they are engaging at any given time. In order to succeed, youth, adults, and the organization as a whole must be open and **willing to take risks**, think outside the box, and develop new attitudes towards youth – not as problems that need fixing, but rather resources to be tapped into.

In the space below, harvest the learning from your group discussions.

Record your learning:

Listening for the Head - the Thinking Level - to thoughts, facts, concepts, arguments, ideas and the principles behind these. "What did I think?"

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How can it be achieved?
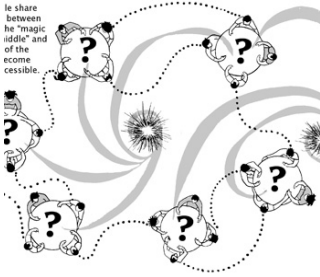
Youth's Rights to Participate in Decisions

"...the child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters effecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child".

- UNCRC Article 12

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty that exists in the world. It is a framework for countries and the governments and citizens within them, to recognize, protect and respect the dignity of all children and to ensure the necessary environment for each child to develop to his/her full potential. The UNCRC was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and ratified (signed and legalised) by Canada in 1991. To date, there are only two countries in the world that have not ratified the UNCRC.

One of the most unique and ground-breaking things about the UNCRC is its 'Participation Rights', that explains that children's abilities develop, they should have increased opportunities to participate in the activities of their society, especially in matters that directly related to them and affect their lives.

Sadly, research indicates that only a minority of youth feel that they are regarded as valued members of society.[viii] A national study in 2000 reported a consistent concern amongst youth that their opinions are not heard, respected, or valued by adults.[ix] Many youth feel excluded from government processes and organizational structures that impose laws, introduce policies, and form programs that affect them directly.

Organizations have a responsibility to create opportunities for youth to engage.

In the Ministry of Children and Youth Services Strategic Framework (2008-2012), it states as one of its aspirational goals, 'every child and youth has a voice'. For MCYS, agencies should:

"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

- UNCRC Article 13

- Create opportunities to involve clients in program design, implementation, delivery, and assessment on an on-going bass.

- Establish safe forums and activities for client to have their requests and concerns with services heard and responded to.

- Support young people involved in services to develop and exemplify leadership both in the context of the services they receive and as active members of their community.

- Promote opportunities for children and youth involved in services to participate in community activities

- Establish opportunities within services for young people to build leadership skills

Outcomes of Youth Engagement
WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

Healthy Youth

Mental Health

Services that promote and respond to consumer/youth/parent perspectives achieve **better mental health outcomes** in terms of compliance, retention, and/or meeting client mental health needs.[x]

In addition, **young people tend to talk to other young people** (before anyone else) about their problems. Youth find it easier to discuss their mental health among peers.[xi]

Engaged youth report **lowered rates of substance use**, for example, cigarette smoking, marijuana, other 'harder' drugs, and alcohol.[xii] Engaged youth also report significantly **lower levels of depression** than non-engaged youth.[xiii]

Employability

Through engagement, youth develop skills that can **lead to employment**, make **connections** to resources and people, become empowered, and build **self-confidence**.

Pancer et al., link connectedness to a **decreased likelihood** of: **suicide** attempts, early sexual activity, drugs and other **risky behaviours**.[xiv]

Catalano noted higher **academic performance**, healthier peer, and adult **interactions** and improved **decision- making** abilities.[xv]

Youth Infusion Model of Creating Optimal Health and Well-being through Adult-Youth Partnerships

Youth-adult partnerships → Enhanced social capital & civic involvement of youth → Better health outcomes + More responsive communities + Better prevention/ intervention programs and policies = **OPTIMAL HEALTH**

Youth-adult partnerships → More inclusive & effective decision-making processes → Better health outcomes...

Outcomes on Youth:

Decreased suicidality

Decreased early sexual activity

Lowered substance abuse,

Less depression

Academic performance,

Healthy peer and adult relationships

Healthy Organizations & Communities

Healthy Communities

When youth and adults work collectively, the result is **healthier and safer communities**.[xvi]

Staff Morale

Youth Engagement creates **positive behavioural changes among adults**. Most frequently, adults concluded that their level of involvement in the work at hand increased because of their collaborations with youth. The emotional connection that youths bring, **spark adult interest and passion** in these issues. Their **emotional energy** is contagious. The optimism and motivation of youth stretches adult staff. Adults report coming out of youth-adult partnerships with **new strategies** for interacting with youth and a growing **sense of competence** in relating to them.[xvii]

Organizational Performance

Through engagement, **organizations learn** about the needs and concerns of youth directly and can develop more **relevant programming** that reflects those needs and concerns.[xviii]

Youth engagement programs often shifts the **public image** of organizations to be more **youth-friendly** which inspires **confidence** in the organization among youth.[xix]

Better Prevention & Intervention Programs

Youth adult partnerships lead to enhanced **social capital** and **civic involvement** of youth and more **inclusive & effective decision-making processes** within organizations. This leads to better **health outcomes**, more responsive communities & better prevention & early intervention p**rograms and policies**.[xx]

SECTION 2. EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

WHAT ARE THE BEST PRACTICES?

Purpose:

The purpose of this section of the course is to:

- Learn new models to understand Youth Engagement

- Reveal what Youth Engagement activities are happening

- Explore how attitudes affect Youth Engagement

- Practice creating a youth-friendly environment

"[Agencies] must also have the freedom to adopt flexible models of youth engagement.

These organizations should give careful thought to their own goals around youth engagement.
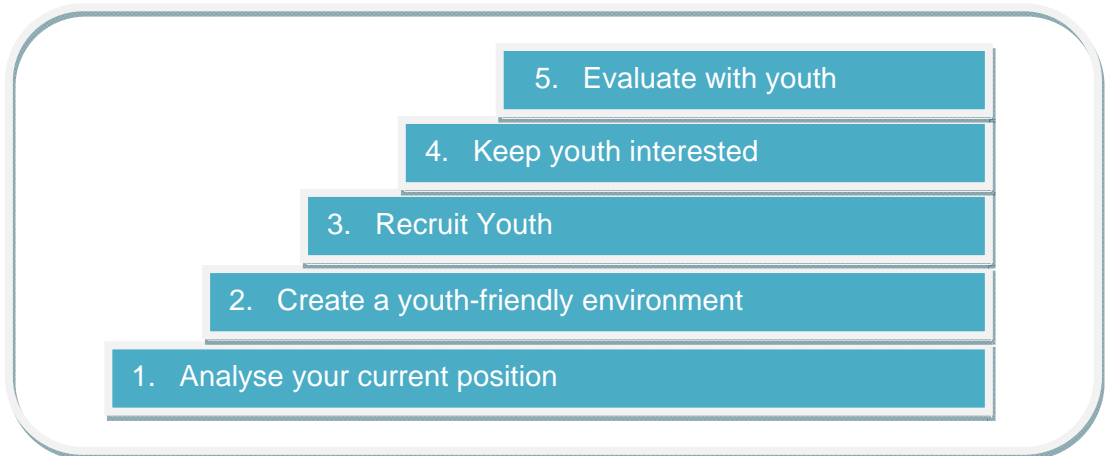
- Ramey et al., 2009

Mental Models

WHAT ARE USEFUL MENTAL MODELS & TECHNIQUES TO ENGAGE YOUTH?

The New Mentality 5 Step Model to Initiate Youth Engagement

5. Evaluate with youth

4. Keep youth interested

3. Recruit Youth

2. Create a youth-friendly environment

1. Analyse your current position

These are five concrete steps that can be taken to help organizations initiate and sustain youth engagement.

1. **Analyze Your Current Position**- It is easier to fan flames rather than start sparks so build on what is working. Know your motivation and resources for engaging youth.

   Example: The Board of Directors of Agency X has just agreed that Youth Engagement should be a strategic priority. Staff must now determine in what area of the agency, youth should be engaged, how much staff time can be allotted and where there is already some work being done.

2. **Create a Youth-friendly Environment**- The meeting place design is as important as values held by the agency and by staff to making youth feel welcome.

   Example: Agency X realises that Children's Mental Health Week is approaching and they want to have youth design posters and speeches. Before they recruit youth, staff need to create a meeting room comfortable to youth , ensure there are staff members who understand how to engage youth on a project like this and ensure there is a welcoming environment created for youth when they enter.

3. **Recruit Youth**- It is important to create clear roles & qualifications for youth to play before they are recruited as volunteers.

Example: Agency X has decided to use their programming room for a youth committee to meet to create a Children's Mental Health Week campaign. They have identified an adult ally and staff are welcoming. Now, it is time to recruit youth who want to help the cause and feel personally motivated by the issue.

4. **Keep Youth Interested**- Youth are attracted to social change opportunities so make the experience meaningful.

   Example: Eight youth are meeting weekly to create a campaign, the adult ally know that meetings have to be a mixture of relationship building and agenda setting. Youth help run the meetings and are responsible for most of the projects being created. They are passionate to see their ideas realised.

5. **Evaluate with Youth-** Youth are constantly moving on, it is important to keep renewing your Engagement efforts by understanding what's working and what's not.

   Example: Now, determine with your youth participants how you are going to evaluate the outcomes and process of your Children's Mental Health campaign. Make sure the things you measure are meaningful to staff and youth.

Notes

Head: What did you learn?
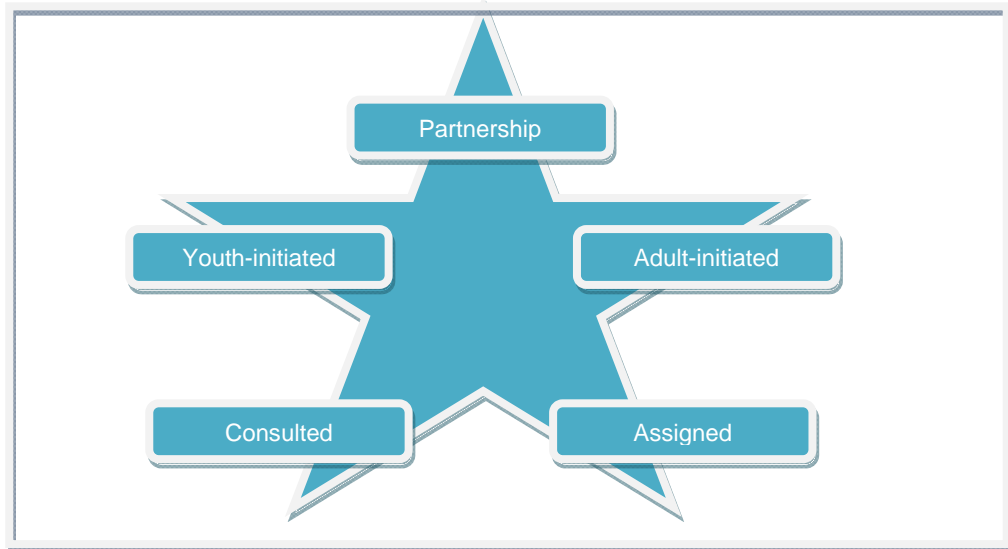
Heart: What did you feel?

Feet: What is your intention?

Roger Hart's (Adapted) Positive Engagement Model[xxi]

Youth-Adult Partnerships: Shared decision making, and equal power balance between youth and adults working as a collective to achieve common goals.

> *Example: The New Mentality Evaluation Committee had an equal number of youth and adults who reviewed feedback on surveys, determined themes and wrote the evaluation report.*

Youth Initiated: Youth conceive of a project idea and involve adults to put it into motion.

> *Example: The Dare to Dream Review team is made up of youth who determine who receives grants for anti-stigma projects. Adults guide the process and do the administrative work.*

Adult Initiated: Adults conceive of a project idea and involve youth early on to put it into motion.

> *Example: Yorktown Family Services successfully fundraised to do a youth-led mental health promotion project. When the funding and the initial planning was done, they recruited youth to implement the project.*

Consulted and Informed: Youth advise adults on ideas and projects and understand how their participation fits into the overall process.

> *Example: Children's Mental Health Ontario created policy statements and held a focus group with youth to ask them what they thought about the statements.*

Assigned but informed: Adults give youth specific tasks, but let youth know how their work will contribute to the project as a whole.

> *Example: Children's Mental Health Ontario asked youth on their advisory committee to make speeches at the Annual General Meeting using the policy themes the audience would be discussing later.*

Negative Engagement

Tokenism: Young people are invited to be members of a group but have little to no influence and decision making power.

Avoid this by creating a structure where youth have access to one-on-one support, and procedures to bring forth ideas, opinions and concerns.

Tokenism Decoration Manipulation

Decorations: Young people are used to augment a cause with their presence at an event.

Avoid this by only inviting youth if they contributed to the planning of the event or will benefit from attending as participants.

Manipulation: Young people are advertised as being leaders of the initiative when in fact adults did all the work.

> *Avoid this by being honest and educate youth prior on the hard work done by adults - work to gain their genuine support like you would other endorsers.*

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

Feet: What is your intention?

"Adults stereotypically view adolescence as a turbulent period of life, characterized by conflict with parents, rebellion, mood disruptions, and frequent risk-taking behaviour."
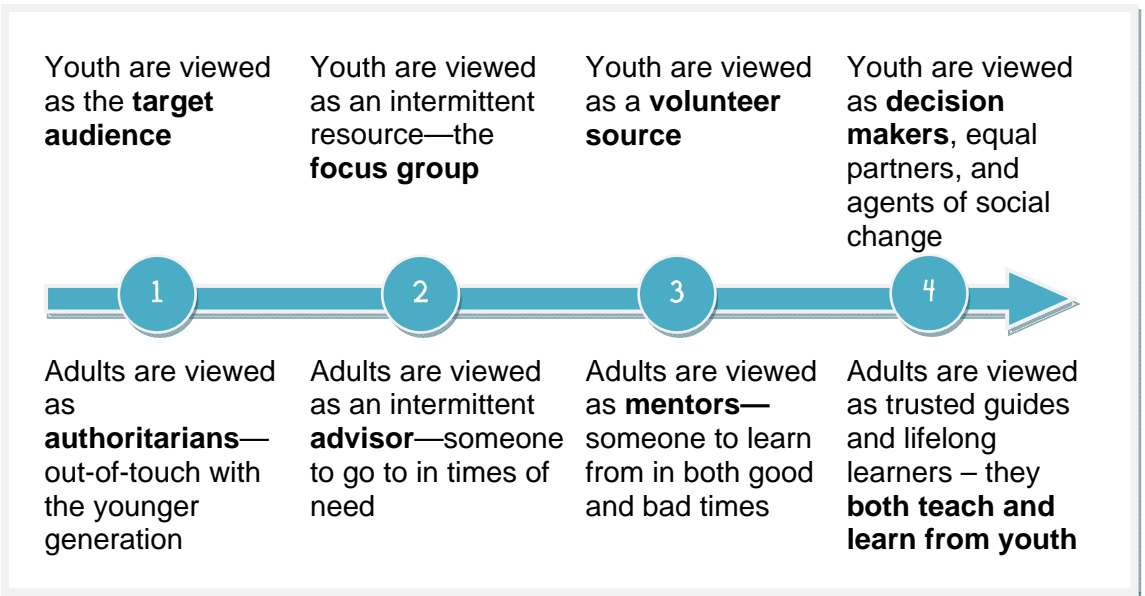
– Melton (1983)

"In one study, college students and parents generated a range of descriptors of adolescents 78 percent of the categories were negative."

– Buchanan (1998)

Youth Infusion Model of Attitudes[xxii]

Youth are viewed as the **target audience**	Youth are viewed as an intermittent resource—the **focus group**	Youth are viewed as a **volunteer source**	Youth are viewed as **decision makers**, equal partners, and agents of social change
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Adults are viewed as **authoritarians**—out-of-touch with the younger generation	Adults are viewed as an intermittent **advisor**—someone to go to in times of need	Adults are viewed as **mentors**—someone to learn from in both good and bad times	Adults are viewed as trusted guides and lifelong learners – they **both teach and learn from youth**

One of the biggest barriers to introducing youth engagement practice into adult-lead organizations is the biases that both youth and adults possess about each other, and if these false perceptions are not addressed it can lead to oppressive behaviours. Of course, attitudes work both ways. The *Continuum of Change* (a conceptual model developed by Youth Infusion) illustrates the different ways that youth and adults may perceive one another within partnerships.

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

Feet: What is your intention?

The New Mentality's "Readiness + Relationships = Engagement" Model

Agency Readiness-
Realistic Expectations
Beyond Programming
Organizational Commitment

Relationships-
Valuing youth
Youth-Adult Partnerships

Youth Engagement-
Meaningful Participation

Agency Readiness

Realistic Expectations- Limitations correspond to different levels of development. [xxiii] Give youth room to develop new skills by establishing realistic goals, timelines, and expectations.[xxiv]

Beyond Programming- Youth engagement exists only when youth make important contributions throughout all levels of an organization.[xxv]

Organizational Commitment- Because it is a shift in how organizations operate, it requires significant organizational buy-in throughout all levels of the organization.[xxvi]

Plus (+) Relationships

Valuing Youth- Adults can sometimes overemphasize or exaggerate youth's lack of experience and need to embrace youth as being assets today, and not just leaders of tomorrow.

Youth-Adult Partnerships- Youth need adult support and organizational opportunities.[xxvii] Youth are in partnership when they & the adults have a voice in decisions and both adults and youth are valued for their contributions.[xxviii]

Create (=) Engagement

Meaningful Participation- Youth engagement must possess real meaning & purpose to both the organization and the individuals involved.

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

Feet: What is your intention?

Collective Mind Mapping & Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry challenges organizations to take a strengths-based approach when assessing and adapting their services for youth. It asks individuals to look at what is working, or what has proven to be successful in the past, in order to help build a strategy that will work in their program, agency or local community.

Reflecting on Past Initiatives

1. What is working within the organization to engage youth ?

2. What factors strategies or processes made the effort so successful?

3. If your agency were to tackle this same initiative again, what do you think it could do to build on its success?

4. What would it look like for our agency to better carry out community engagement efforts?

My Mind Map (here)

Youth Engagement Practice

Step 1: Analyze Your Current Position

Start by Understanding Attitude Barriers

Adultism - assumes the superiority of adults, and supports the belief that youth need to become adults before they can contribute meaningfully to their community.

Ephebiphobia – an abnormal, irrational, or persistent fear of youth

Ageism- discriminatory behaviour based on age towards another person/group (can also be directed towards adults).

Old habits and stereotypes are hard to change. In a study of fifteen American organizations, Zelden et al. (2000) noted that overcoming old habits required leaders within an organization to feel drawn to the purpose of the organization and the value of meaningful engagement. When perceived as tokenism, staff fell back to old habits and stereotypes of youth. Change happened slowly through repetition and experiential learning when adults participated meaningfully with youth and saw the value of their contributions in terms of good process and good outcomes. When youth performed well within decision-making teams, adults increased their confidence and thus increased further opportunities for engagement.

Valuing Unique Contributions

Meaningful youth-adult partnerships permit all members to draw upon and contribute their expertise. To achieve this, research indicates that these partnerships must move away from a traditional focus on trying to define power relations, towards an asset-based frame of thinking.[xxix] Developing a real understanding about the contributions that the two groups can offer each other allows the roles to define themselves.

Youth can provide adults with

- Enthusiastic energy,
- Creative talents,
- Fresh perspectives,
- Direct access to youth population,
- Up-to-date information on the best mediums to reach other youth, and
- Knowledge about current challenges facing youth

Adults can provide youth with

- Opportunities to get involved,
- Resources,
- Mentorship,
- Support,
- Experiential knowledge regarding operations of organization, and
- Credibility with other adults and when they take programs out into the community

> *"Something that's going to be challenging is turning off the social worker or psychiatrist in you. It's about accepting them as who they are. Believing that young people are just as competent as we are is a big deal."*
>
> *-Interview with a New Mentality Adult Ally (Ramey et al., 2009)*

Step 2: Create a Youth-friendly Environment

Transforming Place into Space

In order for the environment to become youth friendly and a positive place, it is important to allow youth to add their identity and character to the particular location. Furthermore, ensuring that the location is a safe space and creates a meaningful experience for the youth will also facilitate this transformation and sentimental attachment. In creating youth friendly environments, it is important to value the interconnectedness and difference between space and place. Most offices and child/youth serving agencies have spaces where youth can meet (e.g. a meeting room) but in order for youth to feel comfortable in this environment, youth need to interact with the space in order to begin transforming it into a place (Malpas, 1999). Place is understood as the collection of human responses to physical surroundings. As a result, human experiences are the factors that facilitate that transformation (Malpas, 1999; Tuan, 1977).
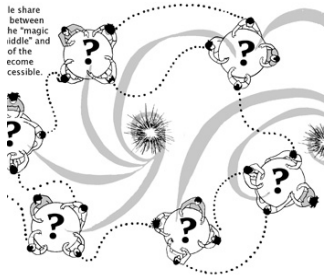
Activity: World Café: Transforming Places to Spaces

Purpose: Discover how to create space & place for youth

Cafe Questions:

What does a Youth friendly place look like?

What does a youth friendly space look like?

Step 3: Recruit Youth

When there is organizational buy-in, that is, when commitment to the practice is shown by all levels of the organization (from Board ----- frontline), the agency is ready to recruit youth. When there is commitment not to create another program but to shift the way of operating towards youth engagement, an agency is ready. When staff members are confident that they have realistic expectation of youth and establish goals and timelines that complement youth's lives and agency capacity, they are ready to recruit youth.

Activity: Story Telling & Listening for Themes

Purpose: Youth & Adult practitioners of youth engagement will share their stories, recommendations, and effective strategies for Engaging youth.

Record- using Stop Lights model

Red Light
Record recruitment strategies identified as being 'unsuccessful'

Yellow Light
Record recruitment strategies you would like to try

Green Light
Record recruitment strategies identified as successful

3. AMPLIFYING THE PRACTICE

HOW CAN I INITIATE GOOD YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE?

Youth Roles Within an Agency

Ad Hoc Committees
Gather a group of youth to consult on a particular youth-related issue

Youth as Consultants
Provide feedback on your organization's programs and services

Reference Groups
Youth evaluate the current operations within a particular program of an organization and suggest strategies for improvement which is then passed onto persons with decision making power.

Advisory Groups
Youth advise management or the board of directors on the operations of the organization.

Peer-to-Peer Support
Young people act as peer counsellors to their peers and receive training in areas such as active listening, facilitation, conflict mediation, and issues that youth commonly face (e.g., substance abuse, anxiety, depression, peer pressure, etc.).

Peer Educators
Youth lead their peers through a workshop or discussion forum. These youth also assist in the design and planning of the sessions that they facilitate.

Researchers
May involve youth assuming the dual role of subject and researcher where youth help to define the problem, develop the primary research questions, establishing goals and outcomes, and evaluate the results (practice known as Participatory Action Research or PAR).

Stay FLEXIVOL

The following eight characteristics will attract youth to your volunteer position.[xxx]

F

Flexibility: young people seek choice – provide volunteer opportunities after school, on weekends, or during school holidays

L

Legitimacy: Provide information about the full range of volunteer opportunities available and explain its significance – young people want to know how they are making a difference.

E

Ease of Access: Provide the youth with information about your organization, their potential role, and what supports will be in place to assist them.

X

Experience: Explain to youth what skills they will gain by volunteering with your agency, and how these skills can be transferred into employment.

I

Incentives: Offer tangible rewards for the work that youth do (appreciation events, meals/snacks, free transportation, etc.)

V

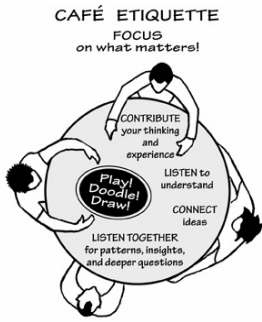**Variety:** Offer opportunities for youth to learn about new things and access opportunities that complement their personal goals.

O

Organization: Young people want to volunteer in an environment that's efficient (i.e. where things get done), yet relaxing (i.e., where they can be themselves).

L

Laughs: Youth are looking for volunteer experiences that are enjoyable, satisfying, and fun!

CAFÉ ETIQUETTE
FOCUS
on what matters!

CONTRIBUTE
your thinking
and
experience

Play!
Doodle!
Draw!

LISTEN to
understand

CONNECT
ideas

LISTEN TOGETHER
for patterns, insights,
and deeper questions

Activity: Pro-action Cafe

Purpose: To collaborate with colleagues and discover the next steps for participants' projects

Participants will help each project discuss:

1. *What is the quest behind question/ project?*

2. *What is missing?*

3. *What am I learning about myself? – What am I learning about my project?*

4. *What next steps will I take?*

5. *What help do I still need?*

Findings from The New Mentality's Project Evaluation[xxxi]

The keys to the successes of local projects included:

- Partnerships that demonstrated strong equality between youth and adults along with active adult support

- Piggybacking on existing complementary structures

- Having two leaders in each project site, tangible project outcomes, and new opportunities for youth

- Youth reported benefits such as respect, value, leadership, confidence, and personal benefits (e.g., mental health)

- Youth reported feeling they were making a difference in the reduction of stigma and that they were having an impact on the mental health system in the future

The key is to keep momentum and sustain outcomes. For that to happen, the program and participants need:

- Consensual understanding of the youth engagement model

- Full support from organizations and easily accessible adult allies

- Sustained funding

Tips from the Innovation Centre (Adapted) [xxxii]

Take the Time to really LISTEN to youth –Listen to what youth are saying, and demonstrate empathy by taking time to understand their thoughts and where they are coming from.

Welcome the ideas of young people and validate their opinions – inviting youth to speak on an issue or plan an event means nothing if you don't engage in conversation with them, and inform them on how their contributions will be used.

Allow youth to make mistakes - when working with youth adults often feel that it's their job to help youth to succeed and prevent them from failing. Successful youth engagement is not about outcomes, but rather the process of being meaningfully involved.

Allow yourself to make mistakes - recognize that it's going to take time to break habits. The key is to be honest with yourself and learn from your mistakes. This also allows youth to see positive role modeling of how to take personal responsibility and move on in a positive way after mistakes are made.

Take time to understand the balance that you need to exercise as the adult ally in a youth-adult partnership - it is important that you give up some control and allow room for youth to make decisions. Be sure to offer youth support and training as they enter into their new roles.

Hold realistic expectations of young people – keep in mind that in most cases, youth aren't paid staff and so a project that involves youth may take longer to complete – not due to lack of motivation, but time restrictions.

Never underestimate the potential of youth – Youth aren't an age, they are people, experts of their own experiences, capable of making valuable contributions.

Be real with young people. The only person that you should want to be is yourself. Young people don't want or expect you to be youthful around them – they want you to be you.

Practice what you preach – if you want young people to be open and honest with you, then show them the same courtesy.

ABOVE ALL - ALWAYS REMEMBER – Treat Youth With Respect!

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