



Youth Worker Practice Network Members Session
“Core Values of Youth Work 2 - Youth Engagement Case Studies”
April 2017

What are Core Values?

The core values are the guiding principles that dictate behavior and action. Core values can help people to know what is right from wrong; they can help youth workers to determine if they are on the right path and fulfilling their goals; and they create an unwavering and unchanging guide.

Youth Engagement as a Core Value of Youth Work

Positive engagement with young people who access our services is key to helping them develop meaningful relationship with adults, work in issues that are affecting their lives, learn new skills, and access opportunities that can help them learn and develop in their personal lives or contribute to their communities.

Just ‘being available’ isn’t always enough for positive engagement, therefore we need to consider what some of the barriers are to young people accessing our services or getting the support we are able to offer them.

In this session, the group looked at three different case studies, and discussed:

- What is going on for that young person, and what are the issues they might need to address
- What supports that young person already has in place (formal and informal)
- What supports their service could provide
- Which other services or support people might need to get involved (referral points)

Each case study then involved a story of an interaction a youth worker might be having with that young person that didn’t go smoothly. Using notes from our previous session about youth engagement, the group then identified:

- What might be going on for that young person today that is affecting the way that you are able to interact with them?
- What might you need to do to make this engagement a positive one?
- What are specific words / phrases / actions / tools could you use in this situation?
- What would you consider to be a positive outcome from this interaction?

Note: If you would like to know more specific details of the case studies discussed in this session, please contact the Youth Coalition of the ACT.

Key points raised in the discussions that are applicable in a broad range of situations

Issues that might be affecting a young person (other than what they are seeking help from your service for):

- Family situation & finances might impact on their opportunity to participate in programs or engage in school
- Mental health (diagnosed or undiagnosed)
- Not having access to support or information regarding a diagnosed mental illness
- Insecure or unsafe accommodation, even if not currently homeless
- Insecure employment, or not enough hours to cover expenses
- Feeling helpless or stressed
- Lack of direction or not really knowing what to do next
- Feeling isolated
- Trauma, grief, loss
- Compulsive behaviour
- Drug and alcohol use (their own, or a family members)

Supports you could assist a young person to access (referral points):

- Accommodation (contact OneLink)
- Friends & Family (including reconnecting)
- Job agencies or community employment programs (such as Belconnen Community Service Youth Employment Hub, Multicultural Youth Service Employment Pathways)
- GP (especially The Junction Youth Health Service for free access, or the National Health Co-op for low cost access)
- Mental Health Services - headspace (in both Canberra and Queanbeyan), CAMHS, online using the headspace app or Beyond Blue website, Menslink
- Financial counselling (Care Financial, Salvation Army, CAP Money)
- Emergency food relief
- Grants - Youth InterACT Scholarships, Indigenous Sports Grants Program, Young Carer Bursary Grants, ACT Secondary Bursary Scheme
- NSET Team
- Youth and Family Case Management Service
- Sporting opportunities - PCYC, MYS free soccer games, contacting sport clubs and asking for fee waivers
- Ted Noffs Street University & Take Hold programs

Turning a negative engagement into a positive outcome

If you are engaging with a young person and it is not going well, think about whether any of the following things might be going on for them:

- Have they had enough sleep (do they have somewhere safe, could stress be affecting their sleep)?
- Could they be affected by drugs/alcohol at the moment?
- Are they trying to impress you or others in the room by being nonchalant or disengaged?
- Are their friends / peers giving them a hard time?
- Are they more worried about something else, and it is distracting them from what you are supporting them with?

- Are they worried you might break confidentiality?
- Are they concerned about 'saying the wrong thing'?

Strategies to reaching a good outcome from a not-so-good engagement:

- Do something with the young person while you talk - set up a room for a group session, do the dishes in the kitchen area etc. (have another focus, not just talking)
- Get out of the current environment - go for a walk, sit outside or in a different location
- Offer "space without pressure" - let them know you can follow up later if they aren't ready to talk now
- Prioritise what needs to be done in that appointment (find out their priority, if yours is different, let them know what you need to do any why, and try to come to an agreement about the purpose and outcome of this meeting/session)
- Be flexible
- Let them know what your actions after this will be, including checking in with them in the next day or two to make sure they are ok - then make sure you do that.

Self Care as a Core Value of Youth Work

Ethical youth work practice needs to include self care for the youth worker.

In this session we revisited why self care is important (see session notes from "An Introduction to Self Care" at <https://members.youthcoalition.net/ywpm>)

Participants completed a "Burnout Self Test" which is available online at https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_08.htm

We recommend completing this self test and reading the article on avoiding burnout at <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/avoiding-burnout.htm>

ReachOut for Professionals also have some great resources around self care, particularly for professionals who support young people, including a Self Care Assessment. This survey give a snapshot of the areas of self care that you are currently doing well in, where you could pay a bit more attention, and helps you think about how you can contribute to your own well being. It should take you 5-10 minutes to complete. The survey, and a range of follow up resources are available at <http://au.professionals.reachout.com/self-care-for-professionals>

Our next Youth Worker Practice Network session will include a component on Self Care as a follow up from this discussion.

The Youth Worker Practice Network is a Community of Practice for youth workers in the ACT & surrounding region. It is coordinated by the Youth Coalition of the ACT, and advised by a group of experienced youth work practitioners from a range of community organisations and youth programs. All youth workers are invited to join the Youth Worker Practice Network.

For more information visit <https://members.youthcoalition.net/ywpm> or contact Hannah Watts, Youth Coalition of the ACT on 02 6247 3540 or hannah@youthcoalition.net