

Positive Youth Development

What is the Positive Youth Development Approach and Why Does it Matter?

When we approach youth work from the perspective that youth are assets to be developed rather than vessels to fill or problems to be managed, youth develop the necessary skills and tools needed to become high functioning adults. In this module, learn more about the positive youth development approach, including supporting research, and the outcomes that can be achieved by integrating a positive youth development approach into youth programming.

Ensure Physical and Psychological Safety

Children and youth often make a decision to participate in a program based upon their sense of physical and psychological safety. Young people who do not feel safe are less likely to engage and learn from their participation. Learn more about fostering safety in your organization.

Build Supportive Relationships

Afterschool and youth development programs offer unique opportunities for youth to develop consistent, committed relationships with caring adults. Frequently, the quality of relationships with the staff are a significant predictor of youths' participation in the program. Learn how to develop supportive relationships in your program for maximum impact.

Create Opportunities to Belong

Provides an overview of both the processes and factors that support the engagement of youth in programs. Emphasis is placed on the development of identity in adolescents and the role of youth workers in supporting the development of positive identity.

Foster Positive Social Norms

The influence of norms is often more powerful than peer pressure during adolescence. Youth programs have an important role in fostering positive social norms among youth. Learn more about the broad influences of family, institutions, peers and others and how your program can help shape the development and adoption of positive social norms among youth.

Provide Appropriate Structure

Maintaining a healthy balance of structure and autonomy is important in youth development programs. Learn more about how setting and maintaining expectations, offering developmentally appropriate activities and your role as a youth development professional all work to influence the right balance.

Promote Support for Efficacy and Mattering

Youth are the agents of their own development, with support from a myriad of adults. Learn more about what empowering youth means, why it matters, and how to promote youth empowerment to benefit both youth and the communities where they live.

Opportunities for Skill Building

Youth programs may provide an alternative venue, compared to traditional settings, in which youth may learn more effectively. Learn more about how your program can support youth by using a variety of teaching methods and learning styles to develop key skills.

Integration of Family, School and Community Efforts

Youth programs can act as a catalyst for bringing parents, teachers, community members and young people together to address issues relevant to the community as a whole. Learn more about how to integrate all of the positive youth development principles to “create a village”.

Source: Foundations for Youth Development