

Helping Youth Be Safe: Setting the Stage for Effective Adolescent Sexual Health

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Workshop Overview

- Key concepts of positive youth development
- Effective strategies that promote positive youth development
- Creating positive environments for youth
- Putting it all together
- Q&A

Youth Development: Three inter-related definitions



- A natural process
 - the growing capacity of a young person to understand and act on the environment
- Principles
 - set of principles, a philosophy or approach emphasizing active support for the growing capacity of young people by individuals, organizations, and institutions
- Practices
 - refers to the application of the principles (Number 2) to a planned set of practices, or activities, that foster the developmental process (Number 1) in young people

The Developmental Tasks of Adolescence: BEING



- These tasks revolve around:
 - defining a clear sense of identity,
 - developing a positive sense of self worth,
and
 - achieving a sense of control over one's life.

The Developmental Tasks of Adolescence: BELONGING



- These tasks focus on:
 - the ability to form healthy relationships with others,
 - using available support systems,
 - finding a valued place in their world, and
 - finding ways to be useful to others.

The Developmental Tasks of Adolescence: BECOMING



- These tasks include:
 - mastering social skills;
 - developing lifelong learning habits;
 - developing a sense of curiosity, exploration;
 - seeing a promising future with real opportunities;
 - acquiring skills to participate in our economy; and
 - establishing a respect for diversity.



Foundational Research: Resilience

- Capacity for adaptation – despite adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats
 - The ability to bounce back
- Resilient child - “works well, plays well, loves, and expects well”
- Attributes:
 - Social competence
 - Problem-solving
 - Autonomy
 - Sense of purpose and future



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The source on adolescent sexual health



Risk Factors



- Life conditions or factors that increase the likelihood of poor outcomes
 - Factors exist in family, school, community and individual

Protective Factors



- Experiences, events, circumstances that promote health and well-being
 - Buffer young people from involvement in risky behaviors
 - Like risk factors, protective factors exist in family, school, community and individual

Power of Protective Factors



- All young people need to be surrounded by Protective Factors
 - Although resiliency research focused on “at-risk” populations, researchers were convinced that most youth benefit from protective factors, whether they are at heightened risk for negative outcomes or not.
- Empirical Support: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
 - Cross-sectional, longitudinal surveys of youth health and behavior

Risk and Protective Factors: Spheres of Influence

- Individual Risk Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Poor expressive language
 - Physical impairment
 - Working more than 20 hours/week
 - Older than grade
- Individual Protective Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Average intelligence
 - Religiosity
 - Self-esteem



Risk and Protective Factors

- Family Risk Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Low maternal education
 - Large family size
 - Poverty
 - Family violence

- Family Protective Factors (not exhaustive)
 - “Connectedness”
 - Parental expectations
 - Monitoring behavior



Risk and Protective Factors

- School Risk Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Retention
 - Suspension
 - Size of school

- School Protective Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Connectedness to school
 - High expectations
 - Youth involvement in school decisions



Risk and Protective Factors

- Community Risk Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Poverty
 - Violence
 - Access to tobacco, drugs, alcohol
 - Little or no social capital
- Community Protective Factors (not exhaustive)
 - Access to role models
 - Informal supports for caregivers
 - Access to resources/services

Findings from 2014 Listening Session (N-20)



- What do you think Beltrami County youth need to become healthy adults?
 - Safe, supportive environments (home, school, groups, etc.)
 - Education
 - Positive influences (peers, parents, church, media)
 - Self-worth



Listening Session (cont.)

- What makes it difficult for Beltrami County youth to become healthy adults?
 - Negative influences (media, peers, parents)
 - Unsafe environments (home, school)
 - Communication Barriers
 - Lack of well-being (physical, mental, emotional, addiction, no hope for the future)
 - Lack of extracurricular involvement

Listening Session (cont.)

- **Some reasons youth are having sex:**
 - Force (sexual abuse, trauma, victimization, survival, etc.)
 - Unhealthy circumstances (substance use/abuse, power, revenge, control, unhealthy relationships)
 - Choice (recreation, enjoyment, curiosity)



Listening Session (cont.)

- **Some reasons youth are NOT having sex:**
 - Fear of consequences
 - Sexual education
 - Expectations (of self, from parents, from religion/church, from peers, from role models, and for the future)
 - Extracurricular involvement



Positive Youth Develop per OAH

- ... an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, uses, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths. Organizations should work to incorporate key positive youth development practices into all interactions with and programs for youth.



Healthy Youth Development: A larger vision of what young people need

- “.... the youth development framework assumes that young people have fundamental, underlying needs for healthy development. When these needs are met, these kids are more likely to develop as caring, compassionate individuals with lots of sparkle and zest for life.”

– Michael Resnick, Univ. of MN

How is Youth Development Being Implemented?



- A plethora of paradigms
 - 5 C's (Forum for Youth Investment)
 - Social Development Theory (Hawkins and Catalano)
 - 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute)
 - Five Promises (America's Promise)
 - Seven fundamental requirements of healthy youth development

Youth Development according to Gisela Konopka: 1973

- **Youth need the opportunity to:**
 - Participate as citizens, as members of a household, as workers, and as responsible members of society
 - Gain experience in decision making
 - Interact with peers, and acquire a sense of belonging
 - Reflect on self in relation to others, and discover self by looking outward as well as inward

Youth Development according to Gisela Konopka (cont.)



- Youth need the opportunity to:
 - Discuss conflicting values and formulate one's own value system
 - Experiment with one's own identity, with relationships; try out various roles without having to commit oneself irrevocably
 - Develop a feeling of accountability in the context of a relationship among equals.
 - Cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.



Theories Applied

- Effective prevention strategies work across risk behaviors
 - Strategies that show promise for reducing a teen's risk of smoking or drinking are similar to strategies that show promise of preventing early onset of sexual activity or engaging in violence.
- Effective strategies use a dual approach of reducing risk and increasing protective factors
 - Targeting singular risk behaviors with prevention efforts alone is less effective than holistic approaches

Healthy Youth Development: Moving Beyond Programs



- Although focus tends to be on eliminating risk behaviors, *all* youth need support, relationships, experiences, resources, and opportunities to become successful and competent adults.
- Young people do not grow up in programs. The task? Align young people's strengths and passions with developmentally supportive resources in the various settings in which they live and interact.

Shifting to a Youth Development Approach



- Requires a shift from “prevention” to “development”
- Program/service goals shift to focus on youth’s capacities, strengths, and developmental (physical, mental, social and emotional) needs.
- Incorporates protective factors and emphasizes ways to tap young people’s passion, enthusiasm and energy.
- May necessitate programs to *reinvent*, not simply reorganize, how they work with youth.



Implications for working with youth

- What's the difference: Problem free vs. fully prepared vs. fully engaged?
 - Answer: it's the difference between reducing vs. increasing vs. fostering

Sexual Health and Youth Development

- Basic public health model (3-tiered approach: care and services to teen parents, contraception and counseling for sexually active teens; education for non-sexually active) – important, but not sufficient.
- Pregnancy prevention requires capacity AND motivation.
 - What goals do we have for young people/what goals do they have for themselves?
- Motivation to address problems is imbedded in the deeper motivations to develop and demonstrate capacity.



People Matter

Effective youth-serving staff exhibit these characteristics:

- A grounding in youth development principles;
- Genuine respect for youth and adult-youth relationships;
- The skills to empower young people to be involved in the decision-making process
- Self-awareness and understanding of program goals, strategies and outcomes; and
- Conviction and belief that youth are capable and can contribute.



Place Matters

- Features of developmentally supportive places*:
 - Physical and psychological safety
 - Appropriate structure
 - Supportive adult relationships
 - Feelings of belonging and being valued
 - Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms
 - Support for efficacy and mattering
 - Opportunities for skill building and mastery
- *National Academies of Sciences/National Research Council's Panel on Community Youth Development Programs



SOS for Youth

- People, programs and institutions who work with youth are engaged in youth development if there is strong evidence of the following practices:
 - Supports – motivational, emotional and strategic supports to succeed in life
 - Opportunities – chances for young people to learn how to act in the world around them, to explore, express, earn, belong, and influence.
 - Quality Services – in areas such as education, health, employment and juvenile justice
 - Relevant
 - Challenging, with opportunities to contribute
 - Supportive adults and peers



Healthy development is not an individual process; rather, it is a community affair



Youth development isn't one more thing to add to your plate; youth development *is* the plate.

Resources

- **Emerging Answers, Douglas Kirby. 2007.**
<http://www.urban.org/events/thursdayschild/upload/Sarah-Brown-Handout.pdf>
- **Teenwise Minnesota. www.teenwisemn.org**
- **What Works for Adolescent Reproductive Health:**
Lessons from Experimental Evaluations of Programs and Interventions. Victoria Ball, B.A. & Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D.
http://www.childtrends.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/ChildTrends-2008_05_20_FS_WhatWorksRepro.pdf
- **Principles for Youth Development.** Stephen F. Hamilton, Mary Agnes Hamilton, and Karen Pittman
<http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/21945/2/PrinciplesYD.pdf>

Thank you!



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