Workbook

A Seminar to Sustain
Youth Engagement Practice in Mental Health Centres

Broadening & Strengthening

THE NEW MENTALITY
DISABLE THE LABEL

Broadening & Strengthening:
A Seminar to Sustain Youth Engagement in Mental Health Centres

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

THE New mentality
DISABLE THE LABEL

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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 is supporting professionals to adopt. Young people and the strength of their lived experience are powerful tools for improving therapeutic outcomes and increasing organizational growth and learning. Toward this aim, in May 2010, The Centre hired The New Mentality (a program of Children's Mental Health Ontario) to develop a comprehensive Youth Engagement Training Program for mental health professionals in Ontario. The Program consists of two workshops, a beginners course, Openings & Possibilities, and an advanced seminar, Broadening & Strengthening.

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this seminar is to offer mental health professionals and youth leaders proven strategies to strengthen, sustain, and evaluate youth engagement efforts. It also offers opportunities for multiple agencies to come together to learn, network, and build a community of practice. This interactive and intensive full-day workshop has been carefully crafted to address the specific needs of child and youth-serving mental health agencies, and will present professionals with practical strategies and tools for sustaining and evaluating youth engagement practice.

Who Should Attend

The focus will be on strengthening the mental health agency through collaboration and community building with other community agencies (i.e., other mental health agencies, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, etc.). The following individuals should attend:

- One youth-serving mental health agency

- Five youth-serving agencies, preferably youth-serving mental health agencies but other youth-serving agencies are allowed

- From **each** agency, the following participants are encouraged to attend:

    o **Three** staff members- ideally from different levels within the organization (i.e., front-line workers, management, board members etc.)- who are experienced in Youth Engagement.

    o **Two** youth acting as leaders & decision-makers within the organization (i.e., youth on committees, advisories, the Board, speakers, workshop facilitators, etc.)

Seminar Facilitators

One staff from The Centre, one staff from a mental health agency and one youth will facilitate each seminar. All facilitators will have personal expertise using the Youth Engagement Model.

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:

- o learn to be together in the best possible way

- o remember and speak about the knowledge and experience they hold

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

- o 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.

Outcomes

By the end of this seminar, you will:

- be versed in a number of Youth Engagement **best practices** in policy, governance, public speaking, programming & quality assurance

- **have a plan** to broaden your Youth Engagement efforts so that they are embedded throughout the organization

- have a comprehensive understanding of **Participatory Evaluation** and how it can be used to enhance Youth Engagement practice

- build a **community of practice** among other agencies in your community that practice Youth Engagement.

"Youth Engagement is 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."

- Pereira, 2007

SECTION 1. BROADENING

HOW ARE WE ENGAGING YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Purpose:

The purpose of this section of the seminar is to:

- review the Youth Engagement model and its benefits

- explore best practices for Youth Engagement in all areas of the mental health agency

Youth Engagement— a Review

WHAT IS THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MODEL AND WHY WOULD I USE IT?

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."[v] Youth Engagement involves these factors:

- 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

Youth Engagement is not:

- 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

Youth Have the Right to Participate

One of the unique and ground-breaking aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is its 'Participation Rights'; that as children's abilities develop, they should have increased opportunities to participate in the activities of their society, especially in matters that directly relate to them and affect their lives.

"...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 child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek,

Outcomes of Youth Engagement for Youth

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.[vi]

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**.[vii]

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

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

Outcomes For Organizations

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.[xii]

Through engagement, organizations **learn about the needs and concerns** of youth directly and can develop more relevant programming that reflects those needs and concerns.[xiii] Youth engagement programs often shifts the public image of organizations to be more youth-**friendly** which inspires **confidence in the organization** among youth.[xiv]

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, communities that are more responsive** & **better prevention & early intervention programs and policies.[xv]**

Mind Mapping Youth Engagement in This Community

WHAT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES ARE GOING ON IN MY COMMUNITY?

In this activity you will explore what is working, or what has proven to be successful in the past regarding your Youth Engagement efforts.

A facilitator will create a visual map of where the Youth Engagement activities and successes are for your community.

Use the space below to create your own mind map

My Mind Map (here)

Youth Engagement

Best Practices

WHAT ARE THE BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITHIN MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES?

Mental Health Services

Young people with mental illnesses and mental health challenges should take an active role in shaping their own mental health care. Organizations should create opportunities to hear and respond to youth perspectives.

A recently developed scale by Janet Walker et al.- the Youth Empowerment Scale: Mental Health- poses questions that indicate some best practices. [xvi] Below is a sample of the questions:

1. I work with providers to adjust my services or supports so they fit my needs.

2. I understand how my services and supports are supposed to help me.

3. I know the steps to take when I think that I am receiving poor services or supports.

4. My opinion is just as important as service providers' opinions in deciding what services and supports I need.

5. I believe that services and supports can help me reach my goals.

6. I tell service providers what I think about services I get from them.

7. When a service or support is not working for me, I take steps to get it changed.

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

Feet: What is your intention?

Policy

Policies are the rules agencies must follow. They ensure that Youth Engagement will be a way of operating for everyone; not a one-time project or program.

Best Practices:

- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for youth (e.g., role on a Board)

- Identify who can volunteer and under what conditions (i.e., current and past clients)

- Identify ways to recognize youth for the work that they do

Examples:

- **Antidiscrimination policies** – designed to protect the rights of youth

- **Governance** – state how youth can make decisions about the organization

EMYS Youth Honorarium Policy (Excerpts)

East Metro Youth Services is a youth-serving organization that strives to foster a spirit of community volunteerism and engages many young people in service delivery including public speaking, workshop facilitation, and professional development trainings in the community.

Full day obligation - $60   Half-day obligation - $40

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

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Governance

Governance means making decisions about the organization or program. The Board of Directors typically does this. Inclusion of youth helps the organization make better decisions.

Best Practices:

- Adults must **give up some of their control** & appreciate the assets that youth bring.

- **Train** staff members on Youth Engagement & train youth on decision-making processes.

- Pair a youth with an **adult mentor** who can sit with them at meetings and provide explanations if needed.

- Ensure that there is **more than one** position designated for youth on your Board (ideally 3+).[xvii]

- Create opportunities for youth and adults to offer their feedback on how things are going.

- Allow youth to speak first on a topic, or have a youth act as co-chair.

Parallel Board- This is where adults and youth split into two groups. Each group first discusses something with their peers and then as a whole.

Board Retreats- This is where youth and Board members meet once a year to make concrete decisions.

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

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Quality Improvement

Quality improvement is ongoing at agencies. Youth having input that ensures programs are meeting the needs and concerns of youth.

Focus Groups

These groups tend to meet one time to consult on a particular youth-related issue. These committees are a good way to hear the concerns and/or suggestions of youth but it is important for adults to:

- not overly interpret youth opinions, and

- hold an information session where youth can provide feedback about the conclusions that adults have drawn.[xviii]

Reference & Advisory Groups

These groups meet regularly. The purpose for these groups is for youth to evaluate and suggest strategies for improvement. Reference groups do not have direct decision-making power but their input is passed on to those who do. It is important that, in order for youth to be effective and to avoid frustrations over levels of power or control, there must be:

- constant dialogue between youth and adult managers, and

- clearly identified roles and expectations. [xix]

Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa (a Snap Shot)

The Downtown Youth Advisory focuses on issues faced by street-involved and homeless youth. This advisory works in partnership with the YSB downtown services and drop-in program to increase youth voice, identify trends and issues, and establish program goals. The youth advisory also assumes a mentoring role for youth who access the drop-in, and provides a bridge between youth and staff.

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

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Program Delivery

Many young people are directly responsible for planning and leading a program. The most common form of this occurs when youth act as **facilitators** in a youth group or workshop. No one understands youth better than youth themselves. Youth know which issues are important and how to speak to other youth. These are some tips to remember when engaging youth in programming:

- Seek, consider, and incorporate **input from youth before** making programmatic decisions.

- Hold **reflection sessions** to assess program activities and participant involvement.

- Encourage youth to help **set program goals** and make plans.

- Provide youth with **leadership roles** options during program activities.

- Regularly talk about specific ways youth can take on leadership.

- Assist participants in acquiring **attitudes and skills** they need to increase leadership abilities.

- **Provide support** when a young person is having difficulty in a leadership role.

- Provide opportunities for youth to plan and **facilitate** group activities.

- Create opportunities for **youth to mentor** new or younger participants.[xx]

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

Feet: What is your intention?

Public Education

Youth help to frame the message, and design the public education and mental health promotion strategy. These are best practices, taken from the *Declaration of Accountability,* to ensure emotional safety of youth who tell their stories:

- Youth **understand the risks and benefits** of sharing their story in public. There are possible **consequences** for the storyteller and his or her family and friends. Sharing personal stories can change an individual's point of view, but it is rare that it leads to systemic change.

- Sharing of personal experiences will be the **choice of the storyteller**. No person should feel obligated either to share a personal story as a way of being heard or to make broad-based change.

- The use of personal stories is **reserved for audiences who can respectfully** hear the story and have the power to implement change - this is rarely the case in conference settings, for example.

- The **motives** of both the storyteller and the organization will be made clear and be discussed ahead of time.

- Measures are in place to support the storyteller **before, during, and after** the sharing of personal experiences.

- Storytellers are **more than their "one" experience,** and staff must recognize that.[xxi]

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mindyourmind.ca (a Snap Shot)

Youth from the mindyourmind.ca Street Team advise adult staff on how to keep the site youth-friendly. They also promote positive mental health among youth in the community through their poster campaigns & video games.

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

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Broadening Across the Agency
WHAT ELSE CAN OUR AGENCY DO TO ENGAGE YOUTH?

Participants will meet with others from your agency. You will have 15 minutes to discuss what you learned from the best-practices conversations.

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?

SECTION 2. STRENGTHENING

HOW CAN I STRENGTHEN WHAT IS HAPPENING WITHIN MY AGENCY?

Purpose:

The purpose of this section of the seminar is to:

- explore models and ways of understanding Youth Engagement

- plan strategies, activities and programs to strengthen Youth Engagement in your agency

- learn how to evaluate your success

Mental Models of Youth Engagement

WHAT ARE USEFUL MENTAL MODELS & TECHNIQUES TO ENGAGE YOUTH?

The 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
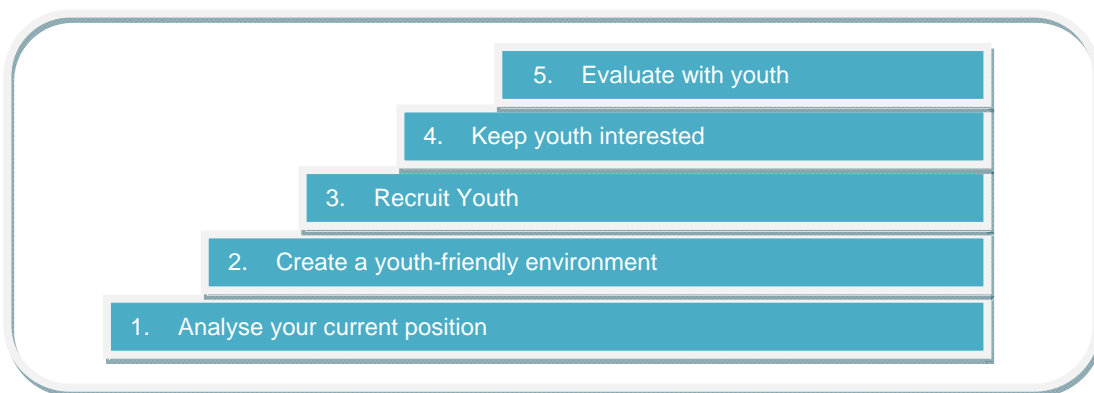
1. **Analyze Your Current Position**- It is easier to fan flames rather than start sparks.

2. **Create a Youth-friendly Environment**- The physical environment and values make youth feel welcome.

3. **Recruit Youth**- Clear roles & qualifications assist in recruiting new volunteers.

4. **Keep Youth Interested**- Make the experience meaningful.

5. **Evaluate with Youth-** Keep renewing your efforts by understanding what's working and what's not.

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

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Roger Hart's (Adapted) Model[xxii]

Positive Engagement

Youth-Adult Partnerships: shared decision-making.

Youth Initiated: Youth create project & involve adults

Adult Initiated: Adults create project & involve youth

Consulted and Informed: Youth advise adults on ideas and projects

Assigned but informed: Adults give youth specific tasks
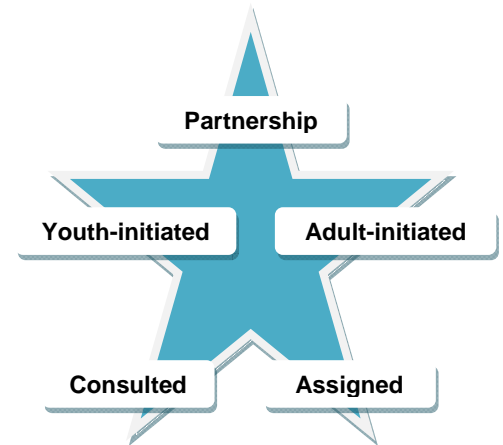
Negative Engagement

Tokenism: Invited but have no power

Decoration: No understanding & no power

Manipulation: Adults want youth to take credit

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

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Youth Infusion Model of Attitudes[xxiii]

The biggest barrier to introducing Youth Engagement practice into adult-led organizations are the false perceptions youth have of adults and adults have of youth. The *Continuum of Change* (a conceptual model developed by Youth Infusion) illustrates the good progression of attitudes.

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 advisors**—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

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

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Youth Engagement Continuum[xxiv]

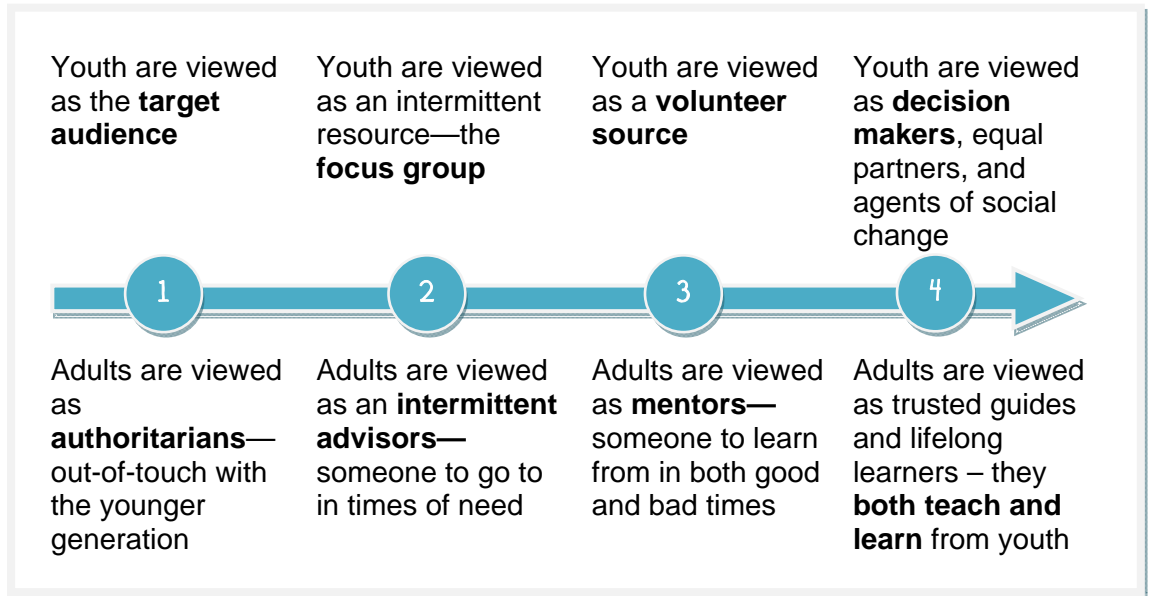   The Continuum of Youth Engagement model outlines five different youth engagement approaches that can exist within an organization. This continuum is rooted in the field of positive youth development. It sees the final goal of Youth Engagement as youth collectively organizing projects & organizations with other youth.

Intervention   **Development**   **Collective Empowerment**   **Systemic Change**
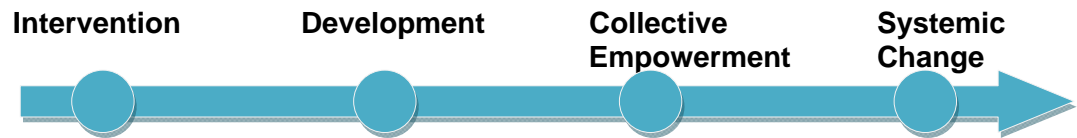
Youth Service	Youth Development	Youth Leadership	Civic Engagement	Youth Organizing
Clients

Pathology or Problem-focused

Treatment and prevention | Services and support

Safe spaces

Growth & development

Youth/adult partnerships | *Includes youth development plus:*

leadership opportunities within programming & organization

understand issues

decision-makers

community projects | *Includes youth leadership plus:*

political education

action around issues young people identify

social change agents

advocacy and negotiation | *Includes civic engagement plus:*

membership base

youth as core staff and governing body

alliances & coalitions |

Notes

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you feel?

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Case Studies
WHAT MORE CAN I DO TO ENGAGE YOUTH?

Participants will be asked to name a problem they are having at their agency that they want help with.

There will be 3 sessions time blocks with 4 sessions. Each time block is 30 minutes.

Example:

Marketplace of Conversations			
	Conversation Space 1	Conversation Space 2	Conversation Space 3	Conversation Space 4
10-10:30	Funding	Getting Adult Allies	Youth Recruitment	...
10:30-11	Board Relationships	Accountability among Volunteers	Adult Attitudes	...
11-11:30	Getting committees to be productive	...	...	...

Guiding Question
How do we expand what we are already doing?

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?

Evaluating
HOW DO I KNOW ITS WORKING?

Evaluations help organizations determine how well projects apply resources, meet outcomes, and influence target audiences. Participatory Action Research (PAR) addresses issues or questions of interest identified and defined by youth. PAR ultimately seeks to improve practice and thus creates new ways for working, interacting and knowing.

Research shows that organizations that adopt Participatory Action Research (PAR) and/or Participatory Evaluation (PE) have:

- stronger levels of youth engagement
- better overall community support
- enhanced funding opportunities
- improved potential for sustainability[xxv]

Principles of Participatory Research

- Those that plan and participate in programs, or are involved in the community, have control and ownership of the research (collaborative effort)

- Focuses on Learning, Success, and Action

- Research is on-going - allowing all participants to use information from research to continuously strengthen a program or community-related issue

- Allows for flexibility - as the research evolves, participants can shift the focus to reflect what is happening and what they feel to be important

- Specifically addresses progression of change – knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours

Planning → Act → Observe → Reflect (cycle)
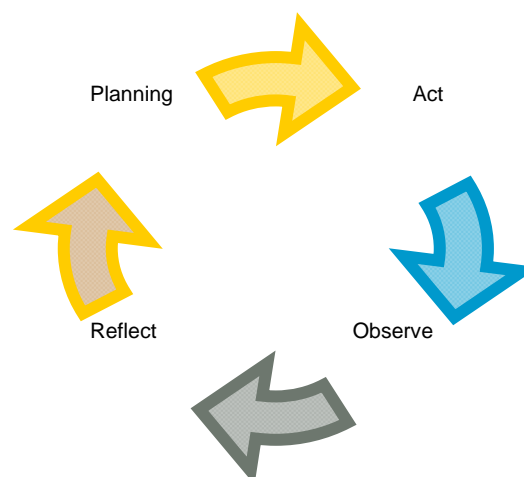
Endnotes

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