



YouthAction
NORTHERN IRELAND

Strategies For success

IN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE



ABOUT THE FACILITATOR:

Peter Davison is an international speaker and expert on youth engagement through promoting healthy relationships with self, others and the community. Peter has celebrated the joy of speaking and the business of making a difference since 1985 with his heart-warming programmes and unique ability to help people of all ages build relationships, value others and share their talents. His home is Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Please www.peterdavison.ca for more information.

INTRODUCTION:

This programme explores best practice strategies when working with young people. We will do this by creating a container that explores the wealth of the participant's experiences and opinions. We will be exploring questions like, "What 12 joys do young people seek?" We recognize that we could approach this topic from asking questions like, "What 12 problems do young people need help to solve?" or, "What 12 things pain young people the most?" But that's not the model we are exploring in this programme. Rather than investigating the negative things that cause troubles we are going to explore the possibility of being our best by creating the best context possible in which young people can thrive.

This will not be a session that feels like we are looking at the tragedies on nightly news. There is another story out there, there is another story in our lives and in our hearts about the people we work with and about the goodness. This programme will lift up the beauty and goodness of young people and explore ways to help people be their best.

We are going to explore a model that believes that in whatever you're doing now there is something that is working well that we can build on. The practice model is called appreciative inquiry and it is an internationally recognised model for bringing about change in human systems.

TWO CONTRASTING MODELS FOR CHANGE

– Deficit-based

Identify the Problem
what is the need?
Analyze Causes
what's wrong here?
Analyze Possible Solutions
how can we fix it?
Action Planning
Problem solved!

+ Appreciative-based

Discover
the best of what is.
Dream
imagine what might be.
Design
dialogue what should be.
Destiny
create what will be.



models

ACTIVITY 1: ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY STANDARDS FOR PARTICIPATION

It is highly recommended to start off a group process by encouraging participants to name and own what it would take for them to feel safe and encouraged to share in the group setting. This invitation establishes from the outset two things that can affect the quality of participation.

1. Safe place to share; and
2. Acknowledgment that your voices and opinions are valued and matter.

Once the list is complete review each point for agreement and clarification. Post the list in plain view and review prior to each ongoing meeting with the same group. Refresh participants memory if they stray from the guidelines.

Sample Responses:

- Respect differences of opinion
- Okay to just listen
- Be enthusiastic
- Be aware to talk over time
- Cooperate
- Keep each others sharing confidential
- Share from your own experience
- Honour the space
- Have fun
- Look after your needs

ACTIVITY 2: IDENTIFYING THE JOYS YOUTH SEEK

What are the 12 joys that young people seek? When you think about working with young people we could look at the problems that they have even look at the pain we can help them solve you look at the challenges that they face in society and all the struggle stuff. But when was the last time we asked them what is bright and beautiful in their life. This programme is about how to help young people find and fulfill their joys so why not identify them clearly..

What are the twelve joys young people seek?

- The joy of praise, understanding and acceptance.
- The joy of new experiences and challenges.
- The joy of belonging.
- The joy of friendship.
- The joy of worth.
- The joy of fun.
- The joy of love.
- The joy of learning.
- The joy of having a voice.
- The joy of respect.
- The joy of possibilities and dreams.
- The joy of fun.

ACTIVITY 3: YOU AT YOUR BEST

Set up: Display numerous pictures cut from magazines of people and animals and things spread out on a large table for ease of viewing and selection. Provide coloured markers and glue sticks and sheets of craft paper each person.

Helping others find their joy means helping them be their best. This exercise explores what their best looks like in images and language. Invite participants to view images and select a picture that, "represents you at your best." They are invited to paste their pictures on the sheet paper and add symbols and images that explore the at your best concept. Pair and share what gives them joy when completed.

ACTIVITY 4: APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEWS

Instructions: Participants are invited to pair up with a colleague and interview each using the following question template. One person asks and records responses on their partners sheet. Allow 20 to 30 minutes each.

1. BEST EXPERIENCE

- Think about the most engaging and rewarding experience working with young people.
- Recall a time when you felt most alive or most excited about your involvement.
- Tell me a story about that time.
- What made it an exciting experience?
- Who was involved?
- Describe the event in detail.

2. VALUES

- What do you value deeply? Specifically:
 - a. What do you value about yourself and your contribution to youth work?
 - b. What do you value about working with your organization?

3. LIFE GIVING CORE

- What is the life giving core of being a professional working with young people that allows you to pull through challenging times?

4. THREE WISHES

- If you had three wishes for greater success working with youth what would they be?

ACTIVITY 5: MAPPING THE POSITIVE CORE THEMES

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Instructions: Participants are invited to share key themes that arose from their interview process and record those as a group on flipchart. After all the groups have completed then they post the charts together on the wall. Distribute five small stickers to each person and invite them to do a gallery walk and place their stickers on the five themes that resonate with them as best practices that will support the joys we seek.

Summary of top themes identified

- Belief in what you do
- Importance of relationships
- Create a safe space for young people to meet
- Funding problems sustainability short-term funding demands a paperwork
- Don't just do something... sit there and take time out to yourself to find answers next step
- Empower young people to find their own answer
- Respect the wisdom of each individual
- Greater understanding of young people and their needs
- Reflect in action and on action

ACTIVITY 6: BEST PRACTICES ART EXERCISE

Instructions: Small groups are invited to select one or two themes from the flip charts that they would like to creatively express as an art project that show their ideas on best practices that support young people to find their joys.

"Be there to help them blossom in the spring of their life and we can learn from their wisdom" Larry

GROUP ONE REPORT



Our theme was relationships and we felt that within relationships there are lots of different layers and it's always not black-and-white - there are lots of ups, downs and dips in relationships. Taking time is the key to building relationships with staff, with young people, with other organizations or with your funders. We have drawn an ear because we firmly believe that for relationships you have to listen and be able to communicate which is why we also have drawn a mouth.

And sometimes we felt that relationships can break your heart in that there is only so much you can do and sometimes feel helpless therefore your heart is broken trying to resolve the problems. We had the eye with expert tear drop as it can make you sad trying to solve everybody's problems. And sometimes you can be burdened down with all the problems you try to solve for everybody else.

We have a scarf tied in a knot because sometimes we get tied by what you can do both professionally and personally. Sometimes you have to think creatively because you might be tied to time or tied what money you have to work with. The balloons represent the different types of young people that we might work with. One balloon is full of life, full of the joys of spring bringing lots to your group. And in the balloon is in the middle who has a few problems but there's also a bit of life there than the other balloon is totally deflated by their life so far you have to help them turn around and try to change. Finally, the baseball pitcher represents all the things that you get thrown at you when in a relationship with others.

GROUP TWO REPORT

Our mobile is the talking stick so anybody who holds the stick everybody else in the circle listens and respects their beliefs. Once they hold the stick it means that they can express themselves believe in themselves and everybody has to give them the right to express themselves so once they have that power and they realize they have this ability they can go deep down into themselves where they have this well of inspiration and their wisdom. They can then start to get all their answers and move upwards towards their hopes and dreams. They can actually shoot for the stars which will bring them back into themselves. On the way out they give thanks as they touch their gratitude stone for the depths of wisdom they have for themselves that can support them to blossom and flower.



relationships

GROUP THREE REPORT

Reflection in action and reflecting on action.

Red represents the colour that's very busy. Everything in the red section is very active with a lot going on which represents young people and ourselves coming in with heavy loads and burdens and lots of issues going on. There's lots of work happening but it's quite manic, we're sharing experiences. So when you are reflecting in action that's when it's going to happen. By reflecting we also see things through different eyes as well as represented by this camera and it is a process, always a continuous process.



Reflecting on action is much calmer and that's why we've painted blue and have lots of words like reflecting on, change, achievement, solutions, goals, realization, inspiration. It is when you consciously plan a calm place by yourself that's neither busy nor hectic. The road to a friend's house is never long and this represents that you can always find someone to talk to or reflect with. Reflecting all the time looking for best practices when we doing work and after we do the work.

GROUP FOUR REPORT



The key things we are looking at are relationships, a belief in what you are doing and reflection. We've pictured mobile phones as paths towards communication, building networks towards other young people and connecting with other people and workers. Cherry blossoms symbolize a belief which blossoms in the spring and when you're in the depths of winter and it's dark and miserable you'll never think it will be spring again.

But that proof of belief. We also have symbols of young people which are the petals that fell off the cherry blossom.

We also put on this quote, "Do or do not, there is no try," because in this job you either do it or you don't, there is no in between.

There was a picture of greyish day and we thought you can't always be in your best form but you can see the sun is sort of shining through from behind it which shows that the good may come back, the good day, the good work and the mountain is what you want to aspire to get up to the best at your game.

YOUTHACTION NORTHERN IRELAND

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a youth development agency. It is a regional organisation with bases in Armagh, Ballygawley, Belfast, Derry/L'Derry, Enniskillen and Newry. YouthAction Northern Ireland works with young people aged 10-25 years to enable them to become active and equal citizens whose voices are heard, respected and valued.

YouthAction Northern Ireland has developed a series of thematic seminars and conferences from which a suite of discussion and inspirational papers have been developed. These include themes such as young men and education, the role of youth work in learning, rural based youth work and working with young people who identify as other than heterosexual.

This paper forms part of a set of inspirational approaches to youth work hosted by YouthAction Northern Ireland in April/May 2008 and facilitated by inspirational speaker Peter Davison.

For further information on this paper contact:

The Newry and Mourne Area Based Youth Work Strategy Team (YouthAction Northern Ireland)

Martin Mc Mullan: Team Leader/Assistant Director / martin@youthaction.org / Tel: 028 9024 0551
Louise Malone: Youth co-ordinator / louise@youthaction.org / Tel: 028 3025 6040



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