

Creating
**Inclusive Program
Environments**
*for Youth with
Different Abilities*

A CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH WORK PROFESSIONALS

JUTTA DOTTERWEICH

ACT FOR YOUTH CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Creating Inclusive Program Environments
for Youth with Different Abilities:
A Curriculum for Youth Work Professionals

Jutta Dotterweich

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ACT for Youth Center for Community Action
Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York
act4youth@cornell.edu

Manual, slides, handouts, and complementary presentations available for download at:

[ACT for Youth: Inclusive Program Environments](#)

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Acknowledgements

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Development Team

Jutta Dotterweich
Director of Training
ACT for Youth Center for Community Action
BCTR, Cornell University

Melissa C. Schroeder
Youth and Family Issue Leader
CCE Schuyler County

Rachel Williams
4-H Youth Development Issue Leader
CCE Seneca County

Nigel Gannon
State 4-H Healthy Living Specialist
NYS 4-H Youth Development
BCTR, Cornell University

Risk and Thriving in Adolescence Program Work Team

Chairs: Jutta Dotterweich, BCTR
Rachel Williams, CCE Seneca

Megan Tifft, CCE Tompkins
Jacqueline Davis-Manigaulte, CUCE NYC
Jessica Spence, CCE Yates
Melissa Schroeder, CCE Schuyler
Shelley Jo Lester, CCE Tompkins
Eduardo Gonzalez, Jr., CUCE NYC
Kathy Bowers, CCE Niagara County
Stephanie Graf, CCE Jefferson County
Nigel Gannon, State 4H Healthy Living Program Specialist
Kristin Lynn Ruggiero, CCE Rockland County
Maureen Rodriguez Callamari, CCE Dutchess County
June Mead, CCE Broome County
Janis Whitlock, BCTR
Mary-Diana Pouli, Amherst Youth Bureau
Phyllis Morena, Youth Development Consultant, Rockland County
Joan Bickweat, Youth Development Consultant, Rochester
Ellen Lazarek, Oswego County Opportunities
Sally Schwartzbach, Learning Web

Curriculum Overview

Purpose

Creating Inclusive Program Environments for Youth with Different Abilities aims to provide youth work professionals with information, practices, and activities to help them accommodate young people with learning disabilities and other conditions such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and trauma. Many young people or their parents may not want to disclose these conditions due to the fear of stigma and discrimination, but there are ways to make programs more inclusive even when participants' conditions are not known to the program providers. The practices and activities presented in this curriculum address needs young people with different abilities may have in program situations and environments, including educational, recreational, or residential programs in a wide range of community settings. Although the intention is to make programs more inclusive of young people with different abilities, this material will also promote inclusion and engagement for all young people. The goals of this training are to:

- Increase knowledge and skills of youth work professionals
- Reflect on existing practices and share resources used to promote inclusion
- Identify and connect with community partners and resources

Development Process

The first phase of curriculum development occurred in response to requests from the field. Youth work professionals were asking for concrete and practical strategies to address unexpected disruptive or challenging behaviors of youth program participants. Suspecting mental health conditions, they were asking for ways to handle and prevent these situations, while very much aware of the fact that most of them were not trained in the mental health field. Following a brief literature review of child and adolescent mental health conditions and social and emotional learning, the developer completed a first draft curriculum for a full day training. It included information about common, often undisclosed disabilities and conditions as well as general practices to provide structure and transparency and activities to promote inclusion and social interaction.

After the first pilot training in 2017, modifications were made and new activities and material added. Three additional pilot trainings followed, two in upstate New York and one in New York City. Participants were initially Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) 4-H educators and other CCE community educators working with youth; as trainings continued, participants included other community-based youth work professionals. In NYC most participants worked in afterschool programs. During all pilot trainings participants provided extensive feedback on the activities and materials. In 2019, three additional pilot trainings were offered to pregnancy prevention and HIV prevention providers, one training upstate and two in NYC.

Curriculum Design

Based on input from the field the curriculum was intentionally designed in distinct sections that can be delivered as stand-alone workshops. There are seven sections:

1. **Including Youth with Different Abilities:** Overview of key characteristics of learning disabilities, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and trauma, including testimonials and additional resources.
2. **General Strategies to Create Inclusive Program Environments:** Reviewing and introducing strategies like universal design for learning, group agreements, power cards, transparency, and predictability of programming.
3. **Promoting a Sense of Belonging:** Exploring activities and practices that build on similarities, strengths and talents, and affirmations.
4. **Integrating Mindfulness and De-stressing Activities:** Introducing mindfulness concepts and activities, and de-stressing tools and activities.
5. **Modeling and Teaching Empathy:** Discussing empathy versus sympathy, practicing empathic listening, and exploring empathy-building activities and resources.
6. **Addressing Challenging Behavior:** Introducing a values self-assessment and discussing general behavior management strategies.
7. **Disability Legislation, Accommodations, and Working with Community Partners:** Brief overview of disability legislation, integrating accommodation questions into the registration process, and identifying community partners and resources.

Drawing on an experiential learning model the curriculum uses a range of small and large group activities to allow for active participation, discussion, and reflection, in combination with short lectures and informative handouts and web-based resources.

Complementary Online Presentations

Two web presentations were developed to provide additional information and resources for Section 1: Including Youth with Different Abilities, and Section 7: Disability Legislation, Accommodations, and Working with Community Partners. They are posted along with the curriculum at: www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/inclusive-environments.cfm

Target Audience

The curriculum is designed for professionals working with young people from elementary school age through adolescence in community settings. The training or training components are also appropriate for supervisors, administrators, and community volunteers interested in learning about inclusive program environments for youth with different abilities.

Implementation

The curriculum is structured in seven distinct sections. Each section takes roughly 1.5 - 2 hours to deliver. The full curriculum requires at least six hours of training time. It can be done in one full day, in several half days or in two-hour sections over several weeks. To deliver the training in one full day it is necessary to shorten a couple of sections; tips on how to do this are included in the manual.

The training is best implemented with 14-20 participants. Because it includes many small group activities, spacious training rooms are recommended. Free wall space is needed to hang up newsprint and large pieces of paper. Set up tables in banquet, classroom, or U-shaped style.

Facilitators should have youth work experience as well as group facilitation and teaching skills. Training in mental health or special education may be helpful but is not required. However, it is highly recommended that facilitators without this background review the online presentations listed above and the references and resources in greater depth.

If the training is being offered in one day, a team of two facilitators may be beneficial.

Equipment/Supplies

- Laptop/projector/speakers/screen (or room with built-in AV equipment)
- Internet access
- Easel/newsprint/markers
- Masking tape (blue painter's tape preferred)
- Handouts (binders optional)
- Name tags
- Optional: manipulable toys (e.g., pipe cleaners, play-doh, slinkies)

Evaluation

A training feedback form is included with the handouts.

Section 1: Including Youth with Different Abilities

Objectives:

- Participants will be introduced to training objectives and training participants
- Participants will be able to identify common features of learning disabilities and mental health conditions young people may not want to disclose in programming

Material: AV, slides, markers, sheets of paper, pens

- Prepared newsprint: introduction questions (optional) and HERBERT SATURDAY

Time: 90 minutes

Handout: Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 1

1.1 Overview of Training and Objectives (5 minutes)

I would like to start by explaining briefly why we developed this training, its purpose, and its objectives. For many years we have heard that professionals working with youth in out-of-school settings struggle at times with young people displaying unexpected disruptive behavior. These young people may have needed special support, but program leaders were not sure what to do.

We developed this training to increase youth work professionals' awareness of learning disabilities or mental health conditions that youth may be living with, but may not want to disclose because they are afraid of the stigma attached. We aim to increase understanding of these disabilities or conditions mainly to introduce strategies and practices that will improve young people's participation and inclusion in the program. The same strategies and practices will also benefit all young people in youth programs.

Disclaimer: This training is not about inclusion in the sense of making programs and agencies accessible and providing accommodations for all youth living with disabilities. That is beyond the scope of this training. In this training, youth work professionals will learn concrete strategies and practices to for engaging youth who have learning and mental health conditions that they may not want to disclose.

Slide: Training Overview

Training Overview

- Introductions & Objectives
- Section 1: Including Youth with Different Abilities
- Section 2: General Strategies to Create Inclusive Program Environments
- Section 3: Promoting a Sense of Belonging
- Section 4: Integrating Mindfulness and De-Stressing Activities
- Section 5: Modeling and Teaching Empathy
- Section 6: Addressing Challenging Behavior
- Section 7: Disability Legislation, Accommodations, and Working with Community Partners

Text:

First we will discuss several disabilities or conditions young people may not want to disclose, as well as their potential impact on programming. The focus will be on behavior patterns that you may see in programming.

Next we will discuss strategies and practices that make programs more inclusive, from general strategies to engage different learners to activities that promote a sense of belonging, mindfulness and stress reduction, and empathy.

We will discuss some common behavior management techniques after we do a brief self-reflection on how we look at disruptive behavior and its function.

Finally we'll take a brief look at disability legislation and potential community partners that could support your work.

Ask participants if they have any questions.

1.2 Warm-up Activity and Introductions (25 minutes)

Before we get started, let's do a short warm-up activity and introductions. Please pair up with somebody you do not work with – somebody you do not know well. Find a space to sit together and take a piece of paper and a pen with you.

Make sure every pair has at least one sheet of paper and a pen. Once they have settled, say:

Your task is to introduce yourselves, then find 10 things you have in common and write them down on paper. You only have 5 minutes.

Ask volunteers to share or (if you have enough time) ask each pair to share their findings.

Debrief activity, ask for comments and observations.

Thank you for doing this. It's quite amazing what we have learned about each other, isn't it? Finding commonalities is a great strategy to promote a sense of belonging – that's something we'll talk about a bit later. A fun, short, warm-up activity like this can easily be integrated into programming.

Please go back to your seat and we'll do a round of introductions.

Optional: Prepared newsprint with introduction questions.

Please tell everybody your name, preferred personal pronoun, agency you are with, what type of programming you do. And tell us what your expectations are for this workshop.

Go around the room, write down expectations on newsprint.

1.3 Young People with Learning Disabilities or Mental Health Conditions (60 minutes)

For the next hour or so we will take a look at some learning and mental health disorders that young people in your program may live with. We'll do a quick overview; for a more in-depth overview we have provided a companion online presentation – you'll find that listed in the resources handout for section 1. In addition, we would like to give you a sense of what it feels like to live with these different abilities, so we included a few testimonials and an experiential activity.

Slide: Celebrity Quiz



Text:

To get started here is a little quiz. *Click to pop up each picture, one at a time. Ask participants:*

- Who is this person?
- What disability do you think they grew up with?

Order of pictures:

Salma Hayek, actress – dyslexia, diagnosed as a teen in Mexico

Tom Cruise, actor – dyslexia, diagnosed at age 7, basically illiterate in high school

Michael Phelps, Olympic swimmer – ADHD

Robin Williams, actor – ADHD as youth (depression as adult)

Naoki Higashida, author – participants may not know this remarkable young man from Japan; with autism spectrum disorder, non-verbal, he has written several books about autism, first one at age 13

Simone Biles, Olympic gymnast – ADHD

Whoopi Goldberg, actor, comedian – dyslexia

Looking at this group of celebrities, what does this tell you about disabilities? You would not be able to tell if somebody has a learning disability or ADHD. And people can be successful and productive. They can pursue all kinds of careers. And they may be successful because of their different ability.

Why do we diagnose and label people at all? The main reason is to provide treatment (if it's available) and support services which enable people to function better in school, work, public, and with family and friends. But naturally by diagnosing people we label them. And with labels come stereotypes and stigma.

In recent years advocates have argued strongly that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder should not be classified as disorders, because this implies disease or deficits. Instead they are calling for the term "neurodiversity," meaning that we all are unique in the way we process information and thus find ourselves in different places on a wide spectrum. Neuroscience certainly seems to point us in this direction. The debate is still going on.

Refer to handout "Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 1."

At this point we will continue to use the terms disability and disorder according to the psychiatric diagnostic manual, since this classification is used for accessing support services and protection according to the disability legislation. We'll talk more about this at the end of the workshop.

Slide: Focus on Undisclosed Disabilities

"Hidden" or Undisclosed Disabilities



Text:

Next we will discuss briefly these invisible, often undisclosed disabilities or conditions: learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, and living with trauma.

These conditions are "invisible" in the sense that there are no physical manifestations.

Slide: Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities

Youth with learning disabilities see, hear, and understand things differently. Common types of learning disabilities:

- Dyslexia (reading)
- Dyscalculia (math)
- Dysgraphia (writing)
- Dyspraxia (Fine motor skills)
- Dysphasia (spoken language)


Text:

Let's talk about learning disabilities. As you can see on this slide there are several types of learning disabilities, each affecting different aspects of learning. The most common learning disability is dyslexia. People affected have a difficult time reading; the condition makes it hard to connect letters with sounds and therefore recognize words. Less common disabilities affect math (processing and using numbers), or writing (representation of letters). Other conditions affect the motor skills involved such as fine motor skills used for writing and speaking.

To determine learning disabilities we do specific testing. And we know that there is room for error. Some young people will never be tested and will struggle on their own. Others are tested incorrectly and are labeled with a learning disability they may not have.

Slide: What does it feel like?

What does it feel like?



<https://www.dyslexia-reading-well.com/whoopi-goldberg.html>

Text:

Let's hear from Whoopi Goldberg, who has struggled with dyslexia. And this was at a time when testing was not available.

Show video (1:44 minutes)

Debrief participants' impression and takeaways. Ask them what they have heard. How did Whoopi describe what she experienced trying to read? Ask about longer term effects when a young person cannot follow what's happening in school.

Slide: ADHD Challenges

ADHD Challenges

- Get distracted easily and forget things
- Switch too quickly from one activity to next
- Have trouble with directions
- Have trouble finishing tasks
- Lose things
- Fidget and run around a lot
- Touch and play with everything they see
- Blurt out inappropriate comments
- Have trouble controlling their emotions

Diagram illustrating ADHD components:

- Inconsistent Attention
- Impulsivity
- Hyperactivity

Text:

Characteristic features of ADHD include difficulty focusing attention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. This manifests itself in some of the behaviors listed on the slide. It is easy to see that many young people living with ADHD get into trouble at school: restlessness, fidgeting, not staying on task, touching everything, getting distracted easily, having trouble with directions, emotional self-regulation, and more.

Slide: What does it feel like?

What does it feel like?

What ADHD Feels Like
BUZZFEEL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nl483G4xKu0>

Text:

Let's hear what people have to say about their experience living with ADHD.

Show video (2:44 minutes)

Debrief video. What did participants hear? What are the challenges? How do they cope? How do they feel about it? Note that medication is not for everyone. One person says that this is who they are – refer to the earlier statement about neurodiversity.

You have heard a few testimonials on what it feels like to live with learning disability or ADHD. There are more testimonials online that you can check out; see the handout “Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 1” for additional video clips and web resources.

Small group activity (10 minutes)

I would like to invite you to participate in a short demonstration project.

Show prepared newsprint: HERBERT SATURDAY

Ask participants to take a piece of paper and pen and follow the directions. Read the directions at a consistently quick pace. Do not get into any discussions or attempts to slow down the process.

Directions:

- On a sheet of paper write HERBERT SATURDAY.
- Change the first letter to D and the last A to O.
- Interchange the places of the first R and the last T.
- Change the B to C and place it before the second D.
- If there are two letters D and two letters T, change the second R to C and the third R to O.
- If there are more than two letters E, strike out the first and last letters.
- Interchange the places of the second E and the A.
- Change the S and the U to N and the second D to U.
- Reverse the order of the letters.

Process: Ask participants to report on their experience (frustration and feelings when something cannot be done). Brief discussion about the impact of these kinds of experiences on young people they work with, if they are the only ones who cannot follow.

Slide: Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Impaired social interaction

Difficulty in communication

Tendency to have restricted range of interest



Text:

The autism spectrum disorder incorporates a wide range of manifestations in three main areas: social interaction, communication, and a tendency to get really focused on one or a few areas of interest. As we'll see in a minute it can look very different in different people.

Slide: What does it feel like?

What does it feel like?

https://www.ted.com/talks/rosie_king_how_autism_freed_me_to_be_myself#t-2281

Text:

But first, let's hear from Rosie. *Show video (5:55 minutes).*

Debrief Rosie's TED Talk. Ask for observations and impressions. What did they learn about autism spectrum disorder?

If you want to understand autism from the inside, we highly recommend the young author Naoki Higashida. Naoki is nonverbal. In his book "The Reason I Jump" – written when he was 13 – he describes what it is like to be autistic and why he does what he does. He organized the book by answering questions people ask him, providing a fascinating look at how he functions. You'll find a link to the book in the Section 1 Resources handout.

Slide: Resource: Interacting with Autism

	Over-responsive	Under-responsive	Seeking Out Sensation
 Tactile	Dislikes being touched or hugged, hair cut or washing, teeth brushing, nail clipping; avoids touching messy substances; complains about tags and/or seams in clothing	A hand fall causes no reaction; not always aware of touch	Bumps into people or furniture to get physical contact / sensation; seeks out messy substances such as finger paints
 Auditory	Puts hands over ears to block out sound; shows extreme fear to sounds like vacuum, siren, toilet flushing, coffee grinder and so on	Difficult to get child's attention; seems oblivious when spoken to; doesn't look around for the source of sounds	Craves loud noise or music; likes to talk, hum or make noise
	Afraid of heights; dislikes spinning, swinging or sliding; needs continuous physical support from an adult	Does not object to being moved, but doesn't initiate movement; once movements starts, can keep going for a long time; does not realize he is falling and takes no attempt to break	Needs to keep moving as much as possible; may repeatedly shake head, rock back and forth or jump up and down or use intense movement experiences such as bouncing on furniture; likes active play (tether ball, roller, etc.)

<http://www.interactingwithautism.com/section/understanding/sensory/1>

Source: Interacting with Autism <http://www.interactingwithautism.com/>

Text:

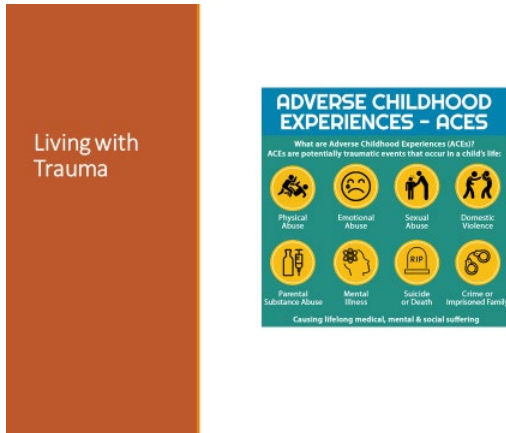
Another great resource for learning more about autism spectrum disorder is this website: [Interacting with Autism](#). *Open the rubric.*

The rubric on this page and describes the sensory continuum that people living with autism spectrum disorder experience. For example, when it comes to our sense of touch, autism manifests in a range of ways in different people. Some young people may be over-responsive, not liking to be touched at all, while others may be under-responsive, unaware of touch. Still others may seek out tactile stimulation by bumping into people or furniture.

So it would be difficult to say that the average youth with autism spectrum disorder will behave in a certain way. A diagnosis by itself does not necessarily give you a lot of information about how the person will behave.

Ask participants if they have any questions. Refer to Section 1 Resources handout for additional information on web resources about autism spectrum disorder.

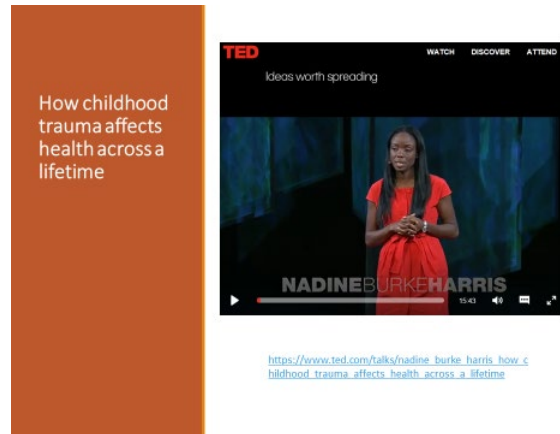
Slide: Living with Trauma



Text:

In recent years there has been a lot of talk about trauma, in particular ACEs, adverse childhood experiences.

Slide: How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime



Text:

Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris gives a powerful talk about the effects of childhood trauma on health throughout life. Let's hear what she has to say about ACEs, the adverse childhood experiences study.

Show the first 6:15 minutes. Debrief participants' observations and comments.

Facilitation tip: The video clip and debriefing is optional. If delivering the curriculum in one day, this may be an activity to omit and refer to on the resource list.

The ACEs study has shown us two things: For one, trauma has far-reaching health consequences. Second, trauma is a common experience, far more common than we thought. We also know that many people affected by trauma have not asked for and received support or treatment. Consequently, it is likely that you will have young people in programming who have experienced trauma.

Slide: Defining Trauma

Defining Trauma

Trauma results from **an event, series of events, or set of circumstances** that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

SAMHSA 2014

Text:

Let's briefly review some key terms and concepts. *Read the definition of trauma by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services).*

Key issues to remember:

- Trauma can be caused by a single event such as a car accident, a series of events such as being in an abusive relationship, or a set of circumstances or chronic stress such as living in a poor, violent neighborhood.
- Trauma has lasting negative impact on an individual's functioning.

We have all experienced stress at some time, right? Maybe intense stress. What does it feel like?

Short discussion about how they experience stress.

- *Ask participants for physical and emotional symptoms of stress, including negative self-talk.*
- *Ask them what they do to cope with stress, reduce stress, or avoid stressful situations.*

To get a sense of trauma let's imagine the stress feels very intense, even life-threatening, and we are not able to control or anticipate stressful situations.

Slide: Re-Traumatization

Re-Traumatization

A situation, attitude, interaction, or environment that **replicates the events or dynamics of the original trauma** and **triggers** the overwhelming feelings and reactions associated with them



Text:

A big concern is re-traumatization. An interaction, situation, sensation, or environment can remind people of the trauma they have experienced and trigger the feelings and reactions associated with it. Not knowing young people's history with trauma may impact many things in youth programming, from topics of discussion to interactions with peers to sounds or lights in the setting. Any of these things could potentially trigger a young person's traumatic experience and reaction.

Slide: Effects of Trauma

Effects of Trauma

Behavioral Effects	Cognitive Effects	Social Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Risk taking- Acting out- Rule breaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Attention- Memory- Executive functions- Verbal abilities- Skills development- Language- Group work- Problem solve- Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Impulsivity- Aggression- Deviance- Withdrawal- Challenged relationships

Text:

We said initially that trauma can have lasting negative impacts on an individual's functioning. Here is a breakdown of how trauma can affect a person. There may be behavioral effects such as risk taking, acting out, and rule breaking. Cognitive effects include challenges to executive functioning, attention, memory, language, skill development, problem solving, and more. Social effects may include impulsivity, aggression, withdrawal, and difficulty in building relationships.

So what can we do in our work with young people? How can we support young people?

1.4 Trauma-informed Approach

Slide: Trauma-informed Approach



Text:

Programs and agencies are encouraged to adopt a trauma-informed approach. What does this mean? SAMHSA outlines six guiding principles:

- **Safety:**
Providing a safe environment; checking in with young people to see if they feel safe in your program setting.
- **Trustworthiness & Transparency:**
Being clear and open about the program and your position, how things are done in the agency. Being clear about expectations and program structure.
- **Choice & Empowerment:**
Encouraging young people to take actively participate; giving them choices and building on their strengths.
- **Collaboration:**
Working in partnership.
- **Cultural, Historical & Gender issues:**
Being aware and informed about cultural differences and the history of trauma for special populations (for example, African American and Native American people).

We are introducing this model early in the training because we will build on these principles when we begin to discuss strategies and practices to create inclusive program environments.

1.5 Potential Challenges

Slide: Challenges



<https://www.templatemonster.net/design-templates/inspirational/6448-emoji/>

Thinking about your youth programs what challenges could you expect?

Text:

Let's think back to what we've discussed. We talked about learning disabilities, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and trauma. We briefly explored common features of each condition and what it may feel like.

With that in mind what kinds of behavior challenges may you expect in your programs?

Invite comments and observations.

Slide: Potential Challenges

Potential Challenges

- Restlessness/Impulsivity
- Aggression/Agitation
- Withdrawal
- Inattention
- Immaturity

Text:

As you just mentioned, these are some potential challenges you may see in your program. Interestingly, these behaviors are often associated with any of the conditions we discussed. As we said earlier, the diagnosis itself is often not that helpful in predicting behavior. Getting to know young people and finding out what is stressful for them, what helps them cope, and what engages and motivates them will be more helpful.

Slide: What is Our Role?

What is Our Role?



Youth workers are "individuals who work with or on behalf of youth to facilitate their personal, social and education development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence"
(Stone, Garza & Borden, 2004)

We are positive role models!

Text:

We want to make sure that you all understand that your role is not to be a therapist. You are not Lucy in the picture: open for practice. As a youth work professional you are an ally of young people – you aim to facilitate and support their growth and learning. And you are a positive role model! You can demonstrate and model many of the competencies young people need to succeed.

References

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Section 2: General Strategies to Create Inclusive Program Environments

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to describe at least two strategies they can use to create an inclusive program environment
- Participants will identify action steps needed to apply these strategies in their work setting

Material: Slides, AV equipment, laminated group agreement cards

Time: 60 minutes

Handouts:

- Power Cards
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines
IMPORTANT NOTE: For copyright reasons, this handout is NOT included in the handouts PDF, but it is freely available from the developer at this link:
<http://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/downloads>
- Comfort Corners

To start our conversation about creating inclusive program environments, let's consider a few general strategies that are easy to apply to most settings in which you are working with young people. We'll also consider how to build on strategies that many of you are already employing.

General Strategies for Inclusion

Slide: General Strategies

General Strategies

- UDL Guidelines
- Group agreements
- Power Cards
- Transparency and predictability
- Establishing a 'Comfort Corner'

Text:

First, we will talk about Universal Design for Learning – or UDL – Guidelines. This may be an unfamiliar term for you. UDL assumes that learners are very diverse. Everybody has different interests, talents, and

strengths, and each of us learns in a unique way. UDL promotes using a wide range of modalities to reduce learning barriers and engage all learners.

Next, we will discuss group agreements and power cards. These are strategies to promote a safe and inclusive space.

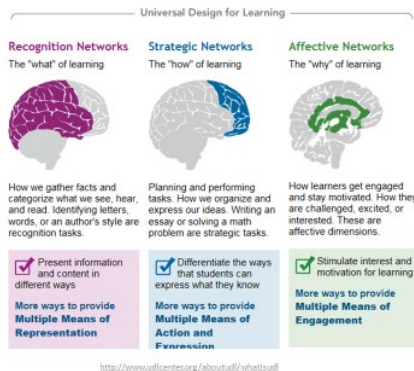
Then we will talk about ways to make programs more transparent and predictable. These simple strategies will make programs a lot less stressful for young people who may be processing information and change at a different pace.

Finally, I would like to introduce you to “comfort corners” or quiet zones.

Strategy 1: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

I would like to introduce you to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to help you develop and prepare program activities that engage all young people in your program. As I mentioned earlier, UDL assumes that all learners are unique in the way they learn. Neuroscience has taught us that we all have different and unique ways of learning and processing information. Our brain develops in interaction with our environment, and our experiences greatly vary.

Slide: Universal Design for Learning



Text:

The Universal Design for Learning approach distinguishes between the “what,” the “how,” and the “why” of learning.

- “What” refers to the content or material you want young people to learn. To reach diverse learners we want to present material in many different modalities – written word, spoken word, visuals, music, art, and so forth.
- “How” refers to the strategies young people use to show what they learn, how they engage with the material – write an essay, describe a solution, draw a picture, etc.
- And “why” refers to young people’s engagement, interest, and motivation. We build on strengths, optimize choices, and provide feedback and praise to create and sustain motivation.

Optional: Play animated video (4:36 minutes) "UDL at a Glance," found at <http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html>

A key message here is to be very intentional in providing content and information in many different modalities and give young people many different ways to act and engage. Are there any questions?

Small group activity (20 minutes)

Let's think about how you can apply this in your settings and what you can do differently. We'll have this conversation in small groups.

Divide the group into groups of four. Distribute handout "Universal Design for Learning Guidelines" from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/downloads>

This handout with UDL guidelines breaks down each of these categories into concrete action strategies. Take a look at them and then discuss in your group how you would apply the guidelines and strategies in your work with young people, in the programs that you run. Take 10 minutes or so and jot down some of the ideas you discussed.

Debrief; ask volunteers to share their findings. Summarize key ideas. Highlight that many participants are doing this already. Using these guidelines might help us all be more intentional in using multiple modalities.

Strategy 2: Group Agreements

A well-established strategy for creating a safe and supportive environment is to create group agreements together with young people. Doing this helps young people develop a sense of belonging and participation. It also helps reassure them if they are worried about confidentiality, embarrassment, or fear of being judged. Most of you are doing this in your programming, right?

How do establish group agreements? How do you go about it? I would like to invite one of you to demonstrate how you do this.

Ask volunteer to come up front and establish group agreements with the participants. Have newsprint and markers available, if they need them. Offer to be a scribe, if needed.

Thank the volunteer. Ask the participants if they have any other ways of creating group agreements.

There seems to be a lot of agreement in how to establish group agreements, mostly by facilitating a brainstorm about how the group will work together. You solicit comments/agreements from young people and, if the others agree, affirm them. You write them on newsprint and keep them posted in the program area. You also may suggest a few additional agreements yourself, if you feel they have been important in past groups.

How do we use group agreements?

Answers may include: To encourage participation, stop disruptive behavior, keep the group on track, discourage judgmental comments.

Group agreements are important. I would like to invite you to try out a slightly different format, keeping UDL guidelines in mind. Instead of writing down the agreements, post pictures. This would require a little bit of preparation. Based on experience you know most of the agreements that will be mentioned. Look for images and symbols that reflect an agreement such as “one mic, meaning only one person speaking at a time. Here are a few examples.

Slide: Group Agreement Visuals



Text:

Young people will still generate the agreements – you just replace printed words with an image or visual. Keep in mind that you may have young people in the group who struggle with reading. Visuals are a great, fun, inexpensive alternative. Create a set of group agreement cards, maybe laminate them, and you can use over and over. Or, work with a group of young people to develop the cards.

- Mic – one mic at a time
- No cell phone – turn your phone on vibrate or turn it off
- ELMO – Enough! Let’s move on
- Step up, step back – if you are a quiet person, challenge yourself to speak up; if you like to talk, challenge yourself to step back and let others talk
- Don’t yuck my yum – people like different things, don’t judge me for it

Entertain comments and questions.

Strategy 3: Power Cards

You may wonder: What are power cards? Similar to visual group agreements, power cards are visual props that young people can use to express how they are doing and how engaged they are in the program activities. Power cards can help you to do quick check-ins with all young people, and they alert you to any youth who may be feeling uncomfortable in the setting. The cards work especially well in smaller groups.

Slide: Power Cards



Power Cards



Text:

One way to use power cards is to create two sets, one set with positive expressions and one with negative expressions. It is best to laminate the cards; they can put together like a key ring. Here is an example.

Positive Set:

- Thumbs up (I am doing well)
- GO (keep going or get started)
- YES (in favor)
- Smiley emoji (enjoying it, engaged)

Negative Set:

- Thumbs down (not doing well, bored)
- STOP (let's end activity)
- NO (not in favor)
- Questioning emoji (not sure what's going on)

This just an example. You can use different symbols as well. They have to be clear and simple and need to align with the group agreements. What are your thoughts on this? Any questions or comments?

Ask how they would use power cards in their program settings.

Strategy 4: Transparency and Predictability

As we discussed earlier, young people may process information differently: some may take longer than others, or they may struggle to focus or keep their attention on a task. A clear program structure and timetable will help them feel comfortable. Let's think about a few concrete things you could do.

Slide: Transparent & Predictable

Transparent & Predictable

- o Schedules & Routines
- o Ease transitions
- o Room set up
- o Calm Zone

QUIET ZONE
Brains at Work

WELCOME

MORNING MEETING

DAILY 5

WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Text:

Schedule and Routines: Young people may feel safer and more comfortable if they know what to expect when they come to a program. A schedule and a regular sequence of activities help young people prepare themselves for activities ahead. It also allows them to make choices if the program topics may be too uncomfortable for them. Keeping UDL guidelines in mind – specifically, using different modalities – posting a schedule and timetable is beneficial.

What else can you do to be transparent and up front about programming?

Possible answers: Review the schedule and activities when young people arrive for programming; review schedule and activities for the next program session at the end of program time; generate a schedule and write it down on newsprint at the beginning of the session.

Ease Transitions: Ending one activity and switching to another can be tough for young people living with learning disabilities, ADHD, and autism. Give young people time to transition from one activity to another. Alert them that an activity is coming to an end (such as a 5-minute alert) and give them a bit extra time to get ready to move into a different activity. Do you have any other ideas for easing transitions?

Room Setup: Comfortable chairs arranged in a circle can go a long way in creating a sense of welcome and ease. How do you set up your program area?

Brief discussion, summarize ideas.

Strategy 5: Comfort Corner

Finally, I would like to introduce you to the concept of a comfort corner or quiet zone. Do you have any idea what that could be? What comes to mind when you hear that term?

Solicit a few responses.

Distribute handout "Comfort Corners."

Slide: Comfort Corner



What is a
Comfort Corner?



Text:

A comfort corner is a space within the program area where young people can go to calm and regulate themselves. It does not have to be as elaborate and fancy as shown on the slide. Depending on your program space, you may identify a quieter corner you can decorate with comfortable chair, blanket, and poster. More importantly, add a bag with small, manipulable materials such as play-doh, squeeze toys, or fidget toys that provide sensory input. Or you might provide headphones and music. The handout lists a few other items as well as a few talking points on how to introduce the comfort corner or quiet zone to young people.

If you offer programs in different sites and have no stable space, a travel bag with some of these items can be sufficient to set up a comfort corner wherever the program takes place.

Here's another tip from the field: You may want to give young people a time limit on how long they can stay in the comfort corner. Maybe have cards available: 5 minutes, 10 minutes, and 15 minutes.

Entertain questions and comments.

Team up with a neighbor and discuss the following two questions. Let's take 5 minutes.

- Could you see yourself using this strategy?
- What would be the next steps to make this happen?

Debrief. Ask for volunteers to share their next steps.

Section 3: Promoting a Sense of Belonging

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify at least two strategies to promote a sense of belonging in their program setting
- Participants will be able to describe the concepts of microaggression and microaffirmation and their impact on youth programming

Material: AV, internet access, slides, paper, pens, newsprint, markers

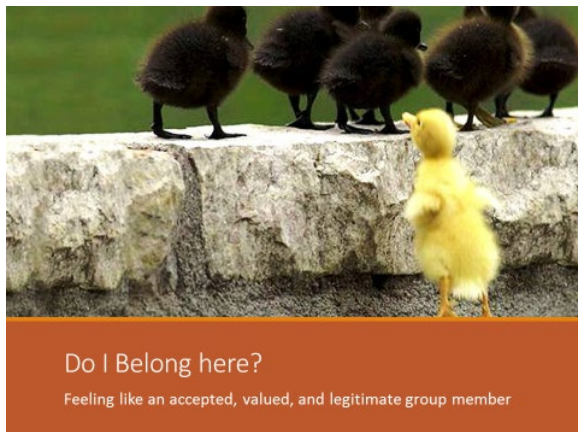
Time: 75 minutes

Handouts:

- Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging
- Strengths Bingo
- Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 3

We talked about some general strategies to make program environments more inclusive for young people with different abilities. Next, we would like to introduce activities that address specific needs, starting with the need to belong. We will explore activities and strategies that promote a sense of belonging and that can easily be incorporated into youth programming.

Slide: Do I belong here?



Text:

We define belonging as the feeling of being an accepted, valued, and legitimate group member. We know that belonging is a fundamental need of human beings – we all need to belong. Neuroscience has confirmed that we are hard-wired to connect. Whenever we come into a room, we immediately check who is there: do we know them, do we like them, do we have something in common, right? We constantly monitor this feeling of belonging. And we all have had the experience of not having this feeling, which leads to discomfort and pain. A feeling of exclusion can have serious psychological impact.

Ask the participants what the impact could be. Answers should include: sadness, depression, anger, decreased self-esteem, and impaired self-regulation/control .

Now that we've been reminded that a sense of belonging is critical – that inclusion is critical – how do we actively and intentionally promote belonging in our programming?

3.1 Promoting Belonging

Slide: Promoting Belonging

Promoting Belonging

Promote belonging by changing the environment

- Emphasize similarities
- Practice inclusivity, participation, and mutual respect
- Create formal and informal ways for youth and adults to learn about each other's interests, aspirations and good things going on in their lives
- Create a welcoming environment (incl. physical environment)

Text:

There are several ways we can promote belonging. For one, we can integrate activities that emphasize what young people have in common. There are many energizers and team-building activities that highlight commonalities. Secondly, we can be more intentional and careful in the way we interact and engage with young people and model respectful behavior. We can also integrate more ways to learn about each other and find out what participants' interests and aspirations are. And finally, we can take a closer look at our physical environment to see if we can make this a welcoming place.

Activity: Have You Ever... (15 minutes)

We put together a handout describing several energizers and warm-up activities that emphasize commonalities. Let's try one. Please join me in this open area and form two lines with the lines facing each other. Have any of you played the "Have You Ever Game"? I will read off a series of questions. If you agree or say yes to a question, you move to this side (*point to the side*). If it does not apply to you, you'll go the other side. Is everybody clear?

Read questions (see activity 4 on the "Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging" handout for examples). After each question remind participants to notice who is sharing the experience with them.

Debrief. Ask how they would use this in their programming.

Facilitation tip: This activity highlights similarities, as did the warm-up, introductory activity in the beginning of the training. If implementing the curriculum in one day, this would be a good activity to omit.

There are several activities described on the handout “Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging.” You may know additional activities that focus on commonalities. Many team-building activities can be debriefed this way as well.

3.2 Group Discussion: Microaggressions and Microaffirmations (15 minutes)

Slide: Beware of Microaggressions



<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/illustration-microaggressions-in-the-classroom.html>

Beware of Microaggressions

Text:

The next strategy we mentioned is the practice of inclusivity, participation, and mutual respect. As program leaders we are role models, so we need to be extra careful that we do not fall into the trap of making assumptions and stereotyping young people. Microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership. People who belong to socially marginalized groups are generally the target of these remarks. Comments may be made intentionally or unintentionally.

Let's go to this website and see how this could play out in an educational setting.

Open the link, scroll over the picture. Scrolling over the black dots will cause a window to pop up with a scenario/comment made by the teacher. It will also identify the stereotype. Have participants respond to the scenarios.

The scenarios described here may be a bit extreme, but I am pretty sure we have heard similar comments. Small, often unintentional slights can be insulting and painful.

In contrast to microaggressions that exclude people, researchers at Harvard University highlight the power of microaffirmations.

Slide: Microaffirmations

Microaffirmations

Harvard's Research: Accentuate the Positive

Nodding and making eye contact with youth while they're talking

Making sure to call on all youth equally

Referring to every young person by their name

Using inclusive language — for instance, talk about “families” instead of “parents”

Openly giving praise for a wide-range of actions, from answering a question right to sitting still during a lesson

Staying enthusiastic when interacting with youth

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/12/accentuate-positive>



Text:

According to researchers at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, focusing on the positive can go a long way. Learners will pay attention and show increased engagement in the classroom. We can transfer this to the out-of-school settings you are working in.

Microaffirmations are simple, affirming strategies such as nodding and making eye contact when you are talking with youth, calling them by their names, and making sure to call on everybody. Using inclusive language. Reinforcing and affirming positive behaviors. Showing enthusiasm when interacting with young people – this sounds simple but can be challenging, since all of us have days when we struggle with stress and the demands of life, and we might not feel so energized and enthusiastic about our work with young people.

Optional: Show the brief animation video (1 minute) and refer to the website.

Activity: Identifying and Affirming Positive Behavior (20 minutes)

Keeping with the theme of focusing on the positive, I would like to invite you to participate in a short activity. Team up with a participant you do not know well and find a space to sit down together. Take a piece of paper and pen with you. In each team one partner is RED and the other partner is BLUE. All REDs please raise your hand. The REDs will start and talk for a few minutes about their day, what they do throughout the day. Partner BLUE will listen for positive aspects – positive behaviors, attributes, skills, talents – and write these down on the paper. After three minutes, we switch and all the BLUEs will get a chance to talk about their day. And the REDs will write it down.

After both partners have had a turn, ask them to take a couple of minutes to share with each other the positive behaviors and attributes they observed. Then ask for a few volunteers to share what they have learned about each other. Debrief activity:

- *Was it easy to identify positive things?*
- *How did receiving positive feedback feel? Affirmations?*
- *How would you use this in your program setting?*

Let's be more intentional in providing positive feedback and microaffirmations. We tend to take positive behavior for granted and focus more on disruptive or negative behavior. As we have seen in the research conducted at Harvard, microaffirmations can go a long way to engage young people.

3.3 Group Discussion: Building on Strengths (10 minutes)

Slide: Build on Strengths

Build on Strengths



Identify interests, passions,
talents, and aspirations

Text:

Another strategy that promotes belonging is to provide opportunities for young people and adults to learn about each other – to learn about our passions, interests, talents, gifts, and aspirations – in short, about our strengths. We have included the handout “Strengths Bingo.” If you would like other ideas, you’ll find them in the Positive Youth Development 101 curriculum where there are several other activities that help young people identify their sparks or strengths.

http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/manual.cfm

What have you done in your programming to help young people identify and use their strengths?

Entertain comments and ideas.

3.4 Group Discussion: Welcoming Physical Environment (15 minutes)

Finally, I would like to hear from you about what you have done in your settings to create a welcoming and youth-friendly space. What have you done to the physical space to make it welcoming to all young people? Think about the décor, posters, and the like. Talk to your neighbor for a few minutes and then we’ll discuss ideas in the larger group.

After 3-5 minutes reconvene the group. Ask volunteers to share their ideas. Write them down on newsprint.

Summarize ideas, highlight youth participation in creating posters, names, banners, etc. Highlight that it does not have to be very costly and can be portable if the program is done in different sites.

Reference

Eccles, J., & Appleton Gootman, J. (Eds). (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Section 4: Integrating Mindfulness and De-stressing Activities

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to describe at least two mindfulness activities or de-stressing strategies
- Participants will be able to describe how they can apply one strategy in their work setting

Material: Small glass jar, filled with water, a water-tight lid, glitter in 4 or 5 colors, AV, slides

Time: 75 minutes

Handouts:

- Sample Mindfulness Activities
- Stress Management Tool
- Relaxation Techniques
- Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 4

4.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness as an approach to de-stress and promote well-being has gained a lot of momentum in the past 10 years. Increasingly, mindfulness programs are offered in schools and in out-of-school youth settings, engaging young people of elementary school age to high school age. It is not surprising that mindfulness is getting a lot of attention since we are living in a world that is very complex, fast moving, and overwhelming.

Ask participants if they have heard of mindfulness and if they have practiced mindfulness activities themselves. If participants have done work in mindfulness, invite them to share their experiences as you go through the material.

What do we mean by mindfulness?

Slide: Mindfulness

Mindfulness

“paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally”

Jon Kabat-Zinn. 2011

“Mindfulness is paying attention, here and now, with kindness and curiosity, so that we can choose our behavior”

Amy Saltzman. 2014

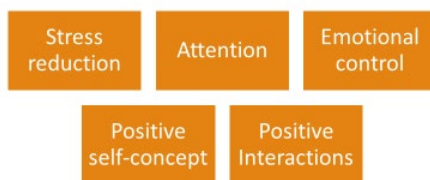
Text:

Jon Kabat-Zinn, who popularized mindfulness outside of spiritual practice, defines mindfulness as “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” Awareness and acceptance are critical aspects.

Another definition is provided by Amy Saltzman, who wrote several books on mindfulness, some with a youth population in mind. Saltzman says that mindfulness is “paying attention here and now, with kindness and curiosity, so that we can choose our behavior.” I like this definition because of the last part – choosing our behavior. Practicing mindfulness gives us the opportunity, the calm and focused moment, to choose our behavior instead of just reacting to the situation.

Slide: Mindfulness Impacts

Mindfulness Impacts



Text:

We have research that shows that practicing mindfulness can be very powerful. It enhances our health and well-being by reducing stress while increasing attention and emotional control. It has positive impacts on our self-concept and promotes positive social interaction. We are also seeing positive outcomes in using mindfulness practices with youth living with learning disabilities, ADHD, and autism. Integrating mindfulness activities can be beneficial for all youth, including youth living with undisclosed disabilities.

Demonstration (20 minutes)

Prepare: Fill one canning or baby food jar with water, have watertight lid available. Have available glitter in 4 -5 different colors to represent different thoughts and feelings. Place all the material on a small table in front of the group.

Why should we practice mindfulness? Let’s do a brief demonstration you could do to help young people understand why mindfulness practice can be beneficial for them.

Pick up the jar with water and swirl it carefully. Let’s imagine this is our mind. Tell me some of thoughts and worries that are swirling around in your minds right now.

Pick up the blue glitter and add it to the water. Let's take one thought – your worry about... – and represent it with the color blue. Swirl it a bit.

Take another color (red) and pick another thought that was mentioned. Add it to the water. Red will represent the thought... Swirl it a bit.

Continue this process with two or three more colors. Seal the jar.

Demonstrate with the jar that thoughts and feelings can be calm at times (the glitter will settle at the bottom) like in the mornings when they get up. Throughout the day thoughts, worries, and feelings will make their minds swirl. Give some examples. Swirl the jar.

When our mind is busy swirling with many thoughts, worries, and feelings, we cannot think clearly. So what can we do to make the water clear again. What would you do to calm the waters?

Solicit suggestions such as silence, deep breathing, etc.

Summing up:

- The jar is similar to a person's mind. Each color of glitter represents a thought or feeling that a person has.
- People do not need their thoughts and feelings to go away. They just need thoughts to settle down so they can see clearly.

Ask participants for comments or questions. Refer to the handout "Mindfulness Activities."

Mindfulness activity: 30-second stretch (10 minutes)

Mindfulness resources and activities are available online; there are many publications as well. You'll find a listing in your resources.

Let's practice one activity that can be integrated very easily in programming. It only takes a minute or so, and can be done right in the beginning when youth arrive or later on during programming when the energy levels drop.

It's called the 30-second stretch. All of you, please stand up and move away from your chair so you have some space around you.

Why do we want to stretch?

- Our brains need oxygen to learn effectively. Oxygen is fuel to our brains.
- A simple stretch break increases our oxygen levels. This helps us focus and stay alert for learning.
- Sometimes learning or creative ideas occur while we are moving.

Go through the following steps. Model the movements.

- *Ask participants to shake their arms out.*

- Have participants stretch their arms up high toward the sky. Let them know it's okay to make stretching noises, such as "mmm" or "ahh."
- Ask them to lower their arms back to their sides.
- Tell them to tilt their heads gently to the left, roll their heads gently to the front, and then over to the right and back to the center. Repeat in the opposite direction.
- Have participants roll their shoulders to the back four times.
- Have them roll their shoulders forward four times.
- Finally, ask them to shake their arms out one last time and be seated.

How do you feel?

Debrief observations and comments.

Tip: Brief physical activities such as stretches or balancing on one leg may be a good introduction to mindfulness for youth of elementary school age.

Mindfulness activity: Counting breaths (10 minutes)

I would like to invite you to participate in another short mindfulness activity. This one is called: Counting breaths.

Why? We count breaths to help develop concentration. Just like playing sports or an instrument, the more we practice, the better we are at concentrating.

Here we go:

1. Sit with your back straight and body relaxed, resting your hands gently on your knees.
2. Breathe in and out naturally and silently say ONE in your mind.
Raise one finger and wait for everyone to breathe in and out.
3. Let's do it again. Breathe in naturally and silently say TWO in your mind. Then as you breathe out relax your neck and shoulders.
Raise two fingers.
4. Now breathe in, and silently say THREE in your mind. Then, as you breathe out, relax your tummy.
Raise three fingers.
5. Let's try it again, but this time I'm not going to talk. Sync your breath to my hand motions, counting silently on your own. Don't forget to relax as you breathe out.

Debrief along these lines:

- Did your mind go quiet when you were counting breaths?
- Did you feel relaxed?
- How many breaths did it take?
- Did your mind get busy again right away or did it stay quiet?

Tip: For older youth, teens, and adults it can be helpful to count from one to ten (not just from 1-3).

For some of you this may be the first time you thought of and experienced mindfulness. To apply this to your work with young people it may require a bit more work and practice.

Slide: Mindfulness Tips

Mindfulness Tips

Practice mindfulness yourself

- Integrate a mindfulness activity into your own day
- Use it to get ready for a program session

Build it into your youth program

- Make an activity part of the program routine
- Encourage youth to practice on their own (at home, etc.)

To motivate – watch LeBron

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCR7OfRuQd4>



Text:

The first step will be to practice mindfulness yourself. You may find that you prefer certain practices such as breathing activities, or activities that focus on mindfulness of movement or taste or a feeling. Practice and use mindfulness strategies yourself during your work day when you feel stressed or overwhelmed.

Knowing the young people you are working with, you probably can identify activities that they may be curious about. Start with those and try them out. Expect that not all youth will engage right away.

Make mindfulness activities part of a regular routine. Encourage youth to practice at home and in other settings.

Young people may ask why. Why should they do this? One strategy may be showing how celebrities are using these techniques to focus and get ready.

Show the LeBron James video clip (10 sec)

4.2 De-stressing/Promoting Self-regulation Strategies

As we discussed earlier, young people living with different abilities may quite often experience stress or anxiety in youth programs. We also know that young people, in general, feel stressed much of the time. Recent data show that adolescents feel stress in ways that are similar to adults, and at times at higher levels than adults (*APA survey 2013*).

As an alternative or in addition to integrating mindfulness activities, it makes sense to integrate and practice a few stress-reducing strategies. For one, it will help young people become aware of stress triggers and manifestations and two, it will give them tools to cope and calm themselves down. You as

program leader will learn what triggers young people in your group, so you can be alert when a young person may need support.

Slide: Helping Youth Cope with Stress

Helping Youth Cope with Stress



Sample tip sheet: <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/insp/html/student/amiangry.pdf>

Text:

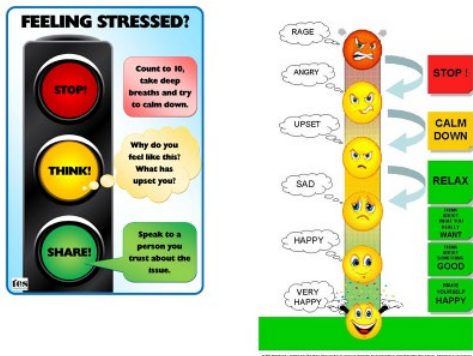
Many young people may not know how to describe their feelings when they stressed or anxious, what triggers these feelings, and what they can do to make themselves feel better. In one-on-one conversations or small group discussions you can help young people describe what they feel when they are upset, figure out what got it started, and explore strategies to make them feel better.

Refer to the handout "Stress Management Tool."

You'll find resources such as structured program activities and listings of coping skills strategies on the Section 4 Resources handout.

Open the link. This is a poster is from a Canadian education website. You can search the site for other similar posters on problem solving, coping, positive self-talk, etc. This is just an example. It would not be difficult to create a poster like this for your program. This will reinforce your discussion and remind young people of the concrete steps to go through when feeling stressed and getting through a tough moment.

Slide: Gauging Stress



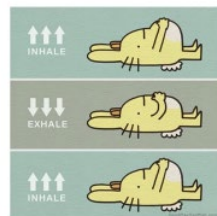
Text:

Similarly, posters or cards like these are available online. They are visual prompts to remind young people to gauge their feelings and stress level and to use a coping strategy to calm down.

Slide: Integrate Stress-Reducing Activities

Integrate Stress Reducing Activities

Relaxation exercises
Physical activity
Walks/activities in nature
Creative/arts activities



Text:

Here are few additional strategies that will help reduce stress levels for all young people in your program group.

- Introduce relaxation exercises as part of your regular program structure, maybe in the beginning when young people arrive at the program site. This may help them shed stress or aggravation they may bring with them from school or home and allow them to focus on the here and now. Take a look at the handout “Relaxation Techniques” to get some ideas.

Have any of you tried this strategy? *Encourage participants to share their experiences.*

- Provide time during programming for physical activities. If you have young people in the group that seem restless and have a harder time settling down, they may greatly benefit from short periods of physical activity and may be able to focus on a task afterwards. As we discussed a bit

earlier, physical activity is good for the brain and even very short periods of physical movements will make us more alert and focused.

- Outdoor activities and walks in nature are great stress reducers as well.
- So are building in a few creative, artistic activities.

Small group activity: Reflection (20 minutes)

Divide participants into groups of four.

Let's take a few minutes to reflect on what we have learned about mindfulness and stress reduction. In your group, talk about how you could use these activities and strategies in your program setting. Think about benefits, challenges, and ways to address these challenges. Jot down key points of your discussion, especially hurdles and ways to overcome them.

After 10-15 minutes ask volunteers to share their findings. Debrief challenges and possible action steps.

Refer to resources on the handout "Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 4."

References

American Psychological Association. (2014, April). [Teen stress rivals that of adults](#).

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). *Mindfulness for beginners*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

Saltzman, A. (2014). *A still quiet place: A mindfulness program for teaching children and adolescents to ease stress and difficult emotions*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

Section 5: Modeling and Teaching Empathy

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to define empathy
- Participants will be able to demonstrate active listening skills
- Participants will be able to locate empathy resources and activities

Material: Newsprint, markers, AV, slides

- Prepared newsprint: instructions for nonverbal communication activity; ways to start a paraphrase

Time: 90 minutes

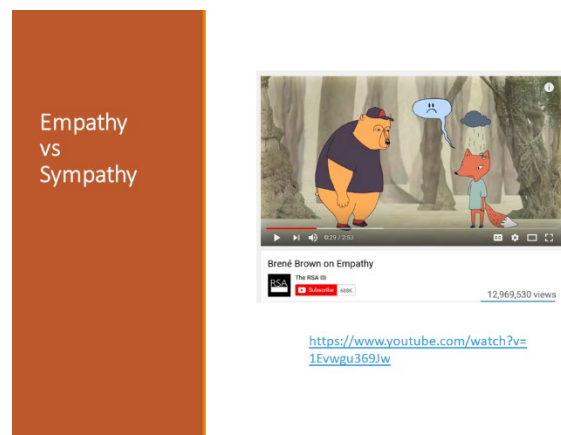
Handouts:

- Reflection Cards
- Kindness Bingo
- Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 5

5.1 What is Empathy?

Most people think of empathy as having a sense of understanding and compassion for another person, sensing what it must be like to be them. It involves acknowledging what another person says and experiences; it requires us to be open-minded and present for another person without offering advice and judgment. Modeling and practicing empathy sound like good strategies to promote inclusion.

Slide: Empathy vs Sympathy



Empathy
vs
Sympathy

Brené Brown on Empathy
The RSA 100
12,969,530 views

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

Text:

Let's start off with a fun, brief video clip by Brene Brown, who has done a lot of work on empathy.

Show video clip (2:53 minutes)

Debrief video. Ask for observations and impressions. What did they see and hear?

Key takeaways: being present, listening, acknowledging. Empathy is not: “at least ...,” offering advice, countering with your own story.

Slide: Empathy – A Definition

Empathy – A Definition

Ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what somebody else might be thinking or feeling.

Affective empathy refers to the sensations and feelings we might get in response to other people's emotions (e.g., mirroring)

Cognitive empathy refers to our ability to identify and understand other people's emotions (perspective taking)

Text:

A common definition sees empathy as the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what somebody else might be thinking or feeling.

We distinguish between affective and cognitive empathy:

- Affective empathy refers to the sensations and feelings we have in response to other people's emotions. We may mirror what they are feeling.
- Cognitive empathy refers to the ability to identify and understand other people's emotions – also known as “perspective taking.”

5.2 Modeling and Practicing Empathy

Slide: Modeling and Practicing Empathy

Modeling and Practicing Empathy



Text:

Moving forward, we will look at a set of strategies and activities to model and practice empathy.

We will first practice active listening, an essential skill in the practice of empathy. As a role model in your program you are in a great position to model active listening skills to the young people you are working with.

Next we will share resources to help you integrate activities that promote kindness and perspective taking in your youth programs.

Activity: Non-Verbal Communication (15 minutes)

Ask participants to sit in pairs. Establish person A and person B.

Explain that Person A will start talking about something exciting or positive that happened to them last week, while Person B will just listen. Before beginning, ask all As to turn around while you silently give Bs further instructions that you have written on newsprint: "Be very non-attentive." Have the pairs face each other and begin. Give them 1 or 1½ minutes for the activity.

Process examples of negative non-verbal behavior.

Next, person B will share something exciting or positive that happened to them last week. This time person A will listen. Before beginning, ask Bs to turn around while you show As this instruction on newsprint: "Be very attentive." Have the pairs face each other and begin, taking 1 - 1½ minutes.

Process examples of positive body language.

Slide – Non-Verbal Techniques

Non-Verbal Techniques

- Silence
- Eye Contact
- Facial expression
- Posture (e.g., leaning forward)
- Minimal encouragement ("uh-huh," go on, etc.)
- Tone of voice



Text:

You mentioned already the signals we give with our facial and body expressions that show the other person that we are attentive. I will add silence because holding our own thoughts back might be one of the hardest, but most effective, things to do. We might be uncomfortable with silence and tend to jump in too quickly with suggestions, questions, etc.

It is very important to give young people the opportunity to express themselves, especially when they are upset or nervous.

We can show our attention by making supportive sounds or brief encouragements. The tone of voice is very important. Did you ever notice that children and adolescents tend to be very sensitive to the tone of voice? For example, in a conversation with my daughter, if I raise my tone just a tiny bit my daughter will immediately say that I am yelling at her. We'll talk more about the importance of tone of voice when we discuss ways to de-escalate challenging behaviors.

Slide: Active Listening

Active Listening



- Listening for meaning
- Attentive to speaker
 - Reflecting facts and feelings
 - Interpreting meaning, feelings
 - Withholding opinions and judgment

Text:

Active listening involves being attentive to the speaker, as we just practiced. But it also means reflecting facts and feelings, acknowledging what the speaker has said. And it involves interpreting the meaning and feeling but without judging it or presenting your opinion or advice on the matter. That is not easy. We tend to rush in with advice, we want to help, especially if the other person expresses distress.

A very important aspect of empathic or active listening is paraphrasing. This means that the listener is responding by reflecting back what the speaker is saying. It often involves identifying the feelings and reflecting them back. Not *judging* the feelings (or the person), just acknowledging them.

Let's practice this.

Activity: Empathic Listening (20-30 minutes)

Paraphrasing should be:

- Brief, capturing the essence of the message
- Non-repetitive (avoid parroting, use other words)
- Worded as a question so the speaker can expand or correct

Paraphrasing should not be repeating verbatim what the person has said; it's not parroting. This can be a bit challenging.

Here are a few examples on how to start a paraphrase.

Prepared newsprint:

- *Sounds like you are...*
- *Let me see if I got it right...*
- *So I hear you say...*
- *...Is that correct?*

Demonstrate, using one of the reflection cards.

Paraphrasing or reflecting sounds easier than it is. Let's practice.

Ask participants to form two concentric circles (facing each other). Hand out reflective listening cards – one per person.

Explain the activity. The folks on the outer circle will read their statements first. Their partner in the inner circle will make a statement reflecting the emotion that was conveyed. Then the person in the inner circle will read their statement, and the other person will reflect the emotion or most important thoughts. When they are all done, ask if they were able to paraphrase; ask if they have any clarification questions.

Repeat this four times. After each practice session, the folks in the outer circle move two spaces to the right.

Debrief: Observations, comfort level, and challenges. Ask if anybody struggled with a particular statement. Process the statement, ask for alternatives.

Active or empathic listening takes practice. It's hard for us not to jump in and give advice or minimize stress. That usually will shut people down and they will stop speaking. Active listening acknowledges that you hear what the other person is saying and it will keep the communication open. It will start the conversation. Good places to practice are staff meetings or in-service sessions.

Alternate setups:

- *If the space does not allow you to form two circles, form two rows.*
- *If the group is small, they can do the same exercise sitting in a circle. One at a time, each person reads a statement to the person on the left, who will reflect. Then that person will read their statement to the person on their left, etc.*

5.3 Integrating Group Activities to Promote Empathy

Another strategy to promote empathy and prosocial behavior is to build activities focused on kindness, compassion, gratitude, and perspective taking into your programming.

I would like to share several resources that can help you do that.

Slide: Kindness



Text:

One resource is the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation website. Their educational lessons are endorsed by CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning.

Open the website.

Open Get Inspired: You'll find listings of ideas that for small service learning projects (*open*). There are community projects, projects involving animals, school. *Scroll to bottom, open Free Kindness & Calendars.* Here you'll find posters and other material you can download. There are also lessons plans you could modify for your setting (ages K-8).

Go to Educator Resources: Here you'll find the lesson plans, ages K – 8; also additional resources (*open*) which include interactive games and energizers.

Activity: Kindness Bingo (15 minutes)

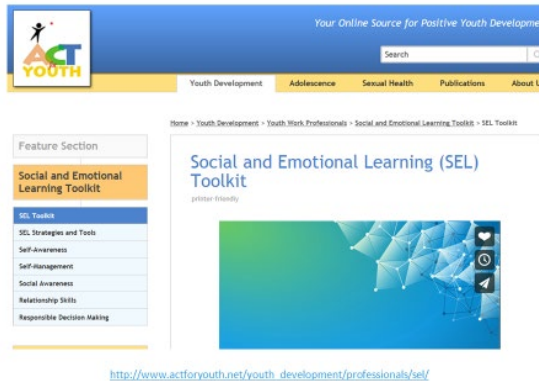
Let's sample one of the activities, "Kindness Bingo." We adjusted it for an adult group. You all know how to play bingo. Find somebody here who could sign off on one of the items. Let's make our goal to complete two rows: horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Hand out the bingo sheet. Take a minute to fill out the center piece, add your own act of kindness.

When everybody is ready, give the start sign.

Debrief.

Slide: Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit



Text:

Another resource is ACT for Youth's Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit.

Open website. It includes strategies, curricula, and activities that promote core competencies of social and emotional learning such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

Open two sections – social awareness and self-management – and scroll down the resources. Social awareness includes resources and activities on empathy and perspective taking.

5.4 Reflection exercise (15 minutes)

Ask participants to form small groups (3-4 in a group)

In your group take a few minutes to reflect on what you learned. Think about the strategies we discussed for creating a sense of belonging, introducing mindfulness activities, destressing activities, and modeling and teaching empathy.

- What are your takeaways?
- What strategies and activities did you like?
- How would you use or apply them at your setting?
- What potential challenges do you see?
- How would you address them?

Ask volunteers to report out. Summarize challenges and possible solutions. Refer to additional resources on the handout "Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 5."

Reference

Greater Good Science Center. (2019). *What is Empathy?*
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/empathy/definition>

Section 6: Addressing Challenging Behavior

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to reflect on their attitudes toward behavior challenges
- Participants will be able to identify at least 3 strategies to handle disruptive behavior

Material: 4 prepared signs/sheets of paper (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree), pens, AV, slides

Time: 75 minutes

Handouts:

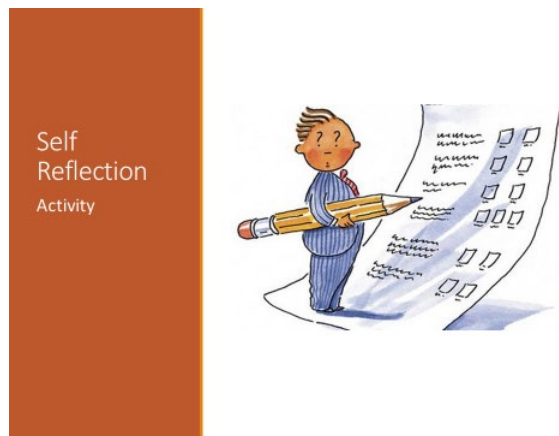
- Values: Self-Assessment Tool
- Using “I Messages”
- Behavior Management Techniques

So far we have discussed many strategies and practices that are proactive; they are focused on intentionally creating inclusion and a sense of belonging, and reducing stress or keeping stress levels manageable. And proactive strategies are definitely best to use, but there will always be situations when disruptive and challenging behaviors occur. Let’s take a look at what we can do to handle these behaviors.

6.1 Self-Reflection

Activity: Values Self-Assessment (30 minutes)

Slide: Self-Reflection



Text:

We’ll start out with a brief self-reflection or self-assessment. I would like to invite you to think about your opinions and beliefs in regard to young people’s challenging behavior, its purpose and consequences. And who is responsible for young people’s behavior. Keep in mind that this is about opinions, there is no right or wrong. It’s an opportunity to reflect and question.

Distribute handout “Values: Self-Assessment Tool” and black or blue pens if needed.

Here are the instructions. Take a pen and mark each statement. You either strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Don’t write down your name on the paper or discuss this with a neighbor. Take a minute or two to do all the statements. Then crumple up the paper.

While participants are completing the assessment, hang up four prepared signs (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) on walls around the room. Make sure that there is enough space so people can gather under each sign.

When everybody is done and has crumpled up the paper, ask them to throw the paper onto the floor in the middle of room. Mix up the papers a bit. Then ask participants to pick up a paper, not to seek out their own.

Unfold the paper. I would like to ask you to represent the opinion of the person who filled out the paper, even if it is not your own opinion. Basically your charge is to take the other person’s perspective and think about what may be the reasons why they checked off statements the way they did. Keep in mind these are opinions, not true or false statements. Are there any questions?

Read one statement and ask participants to go to the sign that corresponds to the position indicated on their paper. Once everybody is in the correct position, ask each group to discuss why people would have taken this position. What may be the reasons or arguments in favor of the position? Give them a few minutes to discuss it among themselves.

Next ask each group to present their reasons (maybe ask for a spokesperson) starting with either strongly agree or strongly disagree. Facilitate a brief discussion noticing the different views.

Repeat this process with at least five statements; if time allows, do all statements.

Debrief activity. First ask for general observations and comments. Notice the range of opinions in this group. Stress again that this is not about right or wrong, but people have different opinions and interpretations.

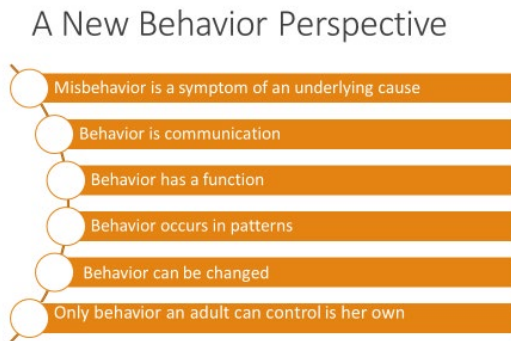
Facilitation tip: Explain that values activities are best done anonymously, so people feel comfortable expressing their opinions. In any group, whether adults or youth, there will be different, sometimes polar opposite opinions and values. This is a way of starting a conversation and seeing different viewpoints in a safe environment.

It is helpful to reflect once in a while on this, on how we feel about young people and disruptive behavior or acting out. Sometimes it may feel personal, that the behavior is aimed at us.

6.2 A Different Perspective on Behavior

Let me introduce you to a different behavior perspective coming out of special education. This may not be new to some of you. If that is the case, please see it as a refresher.

Slide: A New Behavior Perspective



Text:

The main points are:

- Behavior is way of communicating. It has a function; it's done for a certain reason or goal.
- It usually follows a pattern. That means that something sets it off, the behavior happens, and a certain consequence may follow.
- And it can be changed. We do this by understanding the pattern and changing what happens before and after.
- Adults are not in control of young people's behavior. Young people are in control of their behavior.

6.3 Analyze the Behavior

Slide: Behavior Analysis

Behavior Analysis

Look for behavior patterns

Antecedents – Behavior – Consequences

Identify behavior goals

Attention, escape, etc.

Teach underdeveloped skills

Self-regulation, social skills, executive functions (self-control), flexible thinking

Text:

With this behavior perspective in mind, when you encounter disruptive or challenging behavior, the first step will be to identify and analyze the behavior pattern. To do this you can use the ABC approach:

A - What are the antecedents? What set the behavior off? What happened right before the behavior occurred? For example, let's say we have participants, Max and Jo, whose behavior has been disruptive. Before it started, did somebody make fun of Max? Or were people getting too close to Jo in a team-building activity?

B - What behavior occurred? Max started screaming, got very upset. Or Jo ran off to be by herself.

C - What are the consequences? What happened right after the behavior? In Max's case you pulled him aside and spent one-on-one time with him to calm him down. In Jo's case nothing happened. Everybody ignored her for a while and left her alone.

In these two scenarios, what may be the goals of the behaviors? *Discuss possible responses.*

For Max it may be attention, for Jo it may be escape from a tough situation, since she is sensitive to close proximity with others. In both cases the consequences are reinforcing the behavior.

Once you see patterns emerge, you can work with young people to identify situations that are tough for them. In Jo's case, you can discuss with her what made her run off and identify other social settings that are upsetting to her. And what changes can you make to make social settings easier for her? You could also consider what skills we can teach her to help her handle similar situations.

Or in Max's case you can discuss with him ways to cope when others are being rude to him. You may consider teaching him assertiveness skills such as "I messages" (*refer to handout*), or you may focus on integrating social skills training into the group setting. Young people with different abilities will greatly benefit from skill building activities, as do most young people.

Refer to the section 4 handout "Stress Management Tool," which uses this ABC behavior approach. This would be for working one on one with youth.

Refer participants to [ACT for Youth's Social Emotional Learning Toolkit](#) online for resources. (The link is included in the resources handout for the previous section—section 5.)

Ask if participants want to share scenarios they have experienced. Facilitate brief discussion on how to apply this perspective.

6.4 Environmental Scan and De-escalation

In Jo's case, close proximity to others was a stressor. Let's look at a few other situational factors that may be especially tough for young people with different abilities. Knowing about these factors may help you prevent or de-escalate behavior challenges.

Slide: Environmental Scan & De-Escalation

Environmental Scan & De-Escalation

Assess and Address Environment

Lighting

Noise level

Time of day (arrival, after breaks)

Community settings— crowds, noise, activity level

Read Early Warning Signs

Tense body language, pacing, louder voice, sudden behavior change
→ check-in with youth

Text:

Be aware of environmental factors that can trigger stress responses, such as harsh, bright lighting. Bright lights can be a sensory overload for young people. Similarly, high noise levels or sudden loud noises can trigger stress responses.

As we discussed earlier, transitions can be difficult. On arrival, adjusting to the program environment can be stressful. Checking in individually with young people is a good strategy to get a reading of how they are and if they need a bit of extra time to adjust. This may be a good time to introduce a de-stressing or mindfulness activity. You could even make this a routine that starts the program. Keep in mind that transparency and structure helps young people prepare for transitions. Similarly, departure time can be stressful and young people may require extra time to prepare for that.

If you are taking your groups to community events or work in other community settings, keep an eye on factors that could lead to sensory overload such as crowds (proximity to people), noise, lights, and activity level.

Ask participants if they have experienced other environmental factors that can upset young people.

Look out for signs of stress such as body tensing, nervousness, pacing, speaking louder and quicker, or sudden behavior changes. Check in with the young person. Explore with them ways to calm themselves, or remind them to use a coping strategy that has worked for them in the past.

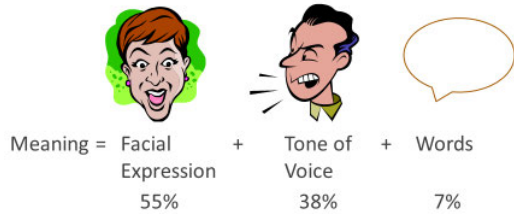
Ask participants to share their experiences. Highlight that getting to know the strengths, stressors, and coping strategies for each young person you are working with is very beneficial and can help prevent behavior challenges.

6.5 Group Discussion: Behavior Management Techniques (20 minutes)

When it comes to behavior management there are some general techniques that most of you are probably familiar with. Above all it is important keep the ABC framework in mind and not take acting out behavior personally. It is essential not to get drawn into a battle.

Slide: Keep in mind... when stressed

Keep in Mind...When Stressed



Text:

We know from research (Mehrabian, 1981) that when we are stressed, facial expressions and tone of voice are more important than what is being said. It's not effective to get louder than a young person who is upset and is getting loud. Your facial expression and tone of voice will most likely escalate the tension. Basically, they won't hear what you are saying. The ability to speak in a calm, respectful, nonthreatening tone is important, especially when the young person you are working with is starting to show signs of agitation.

Slide: Behavior Management Techniques

Behavior Management Techniques

- Proximity
- Prompts
- Hurdle help
- Time away
- Redirection
- Directive statements
- Caring gesture

Text:

Let's talk about a few common behavior management techniques.

Use the handout "Behavior Management Techniques" to review each technique.

Ask participants if they have used these techniques, which ones, and how it worked for them.

Affirm that the best behavior management technique is to use proactive strategies to create an inclusive and safe environment.

References

Minahan, J. (2014). *The Behavior Code Companion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press

Mehrabian, A. (1981). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes [2nd Ed.]*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Section 7: Disability Legislation, Accommodations, and Working with Community Partners

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to describe key points of disability legislation
- Participants will be able to define accommodations
- Participants will be able to identify community partners who can offer support and expertise to young people living with different abilities

Material: Sheets of newsprint, markers, tape, AV, slides, soft ball (volley ball or thumbball)

Time: 75 minutes

Handouts:

- Registration/Enrollment Questions
- Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 7
- Training Feedback Form

The focus of this training has been to include and welcome young people who live with a mental health condition or learning disability that they may not disclose. Nonetheless, it is helpful to be aware of the legislation and rights young people can call on if they or their parents do choose to disclose a disability and request accommodations. We would also like to highlight some potential community partners who have expertise in the field and can provide additional support.

7.1 Disability Legislation

We will start with a very brief overview of disability legislation.

Slide: Defining Disability

Defining Disability

Disabilities affect people's daily functioning, work, social relationships and participation in public life.
Disabilities can be

- Physical
- Sensory
- Developmental
- Intellectual
- Learning
- Mental health condition
- Health condition

Text:

Disabilities affect an individual’s daily functioning, be it at school, work, in social relationships, or participating in public life. Disabilities range from physical disabilities to sensory, developmental, intellectual, learning, mental health, and health.

Slide: Important Disability Legislation

Important Disability Legislation

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



Text:

- The “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (known as IDEA) is important legislation for children and youth.
- The major disability legislation for adults (beyond high school) is the “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA).
- Disability legislation has two main functions: to protect from discrimination and abuse, and to provide additional services or accommodations that will remove or reduce barriers.

Slide: Accommodations

Accommodations

An accommodation is essentially any strategy that overcomes or lessens the effect of a specific barrier. A barrier is an obstacle that may exist in school, at the workplace, in the community, or in one’s own home.

- Accommodations
- Changes to facilities
 - Special services
 - Creative thinking and problem solving

Text:

In both laws the term “accommodation” is a very important one.

An accommodation is essentially any strategy that overcomes or lessens the effect of a specific barrier. A barrier is an obstacle that may exist in school, the workplace, the community, or one's own home.

There are three major types of accommodations:

- Changes to facilities and equipment, such as adding ramps or equipping traffic lights with audio signals.
- Provision of special services, such as videos that explain application forms, or having someone available to read aloud the instructions and questions on a form.
- Creative thinking and problem solving, such as flexible work schedules or telecommuting.

Slide: IDEA

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA covers ages: Birth - 21

Thirteen Categories:

Autism, Deaf-blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance,
Hearing impairment, Mental retardation, Multiple
disabilities, Orthopedic impairment, Other health
impairment, Specific learning disability, Traumatic brain
injury, Speech or language impairment, Visual impairment



Text:

Let's turn to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. This law was initially developed in 1975, but has been updated several times. It has two parts: one for early childhood (from birth through age two), and one for children and youth age three through 21.

IDEA recognizes 13 categories of disability. In alphabetical order, these are:

Autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness).

Slide: IDEA Impact on Education

IDEA Impact on Education

Free public education
Quality instruction
Testing to establish needs and services
Individual education plan (IEP)
Specialty support or accommodations

Accommodations can include
Verbal instructions
Visuals
Additional test time



Text:

This law mandates that states provide free public education to all children and youth with disabilities. There are several requirements under IDEA:

1. Quality instruction and qualified teachers. “Quality” includes placing students in the least restrictive setting.
2. Systematic testing to establish needs and services.
3. Individual education plan (known as IEP), which includes a statement about the young person’s academic achievements and needs, annual measurable goals, and alternative assessments or tests.
4. Specialty support or accommodations.

For example, if a student has a reading disability that makes it difficult for him to understand written language, he could receive additional support such as verbal instructions, visuals, and extra time for taking tests.

Slide: ADA

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

A person qualifies as having a disability if they meet one of the following:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- A record of such impairment
- A perception by others as having an impairment

Text:

The Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination.

The ADA defines a person with a disability as an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are perceived to have one. ADA also protects people *associated with* an individual who has a disability from discrimination. For example, it is not legal to discriminate against a person who works in a mental health facility.

7.2 Accommodations

Slide: Accommodations

Accommodations

Accommodations are provided only when a person discloses his or her disability and requests accommodations.

Disclosure is not mandatory, but needed when asking for accommodations.

Decision to disclose belongs *solely* to the person with a disability

They are not considered reasonable if they represent "undue burden" or fundamentally alter the program.

Text:

As we discussed earlier, accommodations are modifications to policy, rules, or the physical environment that enable individuals to enjoy equal benefits of program, work, or services.

Accommodations can be provided if a person discloses his or her disability and requests accommodations. People do not have to disclose a disability; they only have to do so when they are asking for accommodations. The decision to disclose belongs solely to the person or their parent.

The law also specifies that accommodations have to be **reasonable**. If they represent an undue burden or change the program in fundamental ways, they are not considered reasonable. An example of an undue burden might be to do major construction in the old building your agency is housed in to make the facility wheelchair accessible. "Undue burden" is naturally open to interpretation. And this explains why many facilities are not accessible.

Ask participants if they have any questions. Repeat basic tenets: to protect from discrimination and to make special supports (accommodations) available so that young people can participate in school, program activities, and public life.

Refer to online presentation "Disability Legislation" for additional information on IDEA and ADA. A link to the presentation is included in Section 7 Resources handout.

Group Discussion: What Are the Implications? (15-20 minutes)

Young people living with disabilities may not come forward to ask for accommodations because they fear stigma and discrimination. But accommodations can make it easier for them to participate and benefit from the program. So what can we do?

Ask participants to talk to a neighbor and share their ideas.

Facilitate a brief conversation. Ask participants to share their experiences and what they have done.

Refer to handout “Registration/Enrollment Questions.” Discuss intake process: Include questions about special needs, strengths, difficult situations/stressors, coping strategies. Ask participants who have changed their intake process and form to share it with the group.

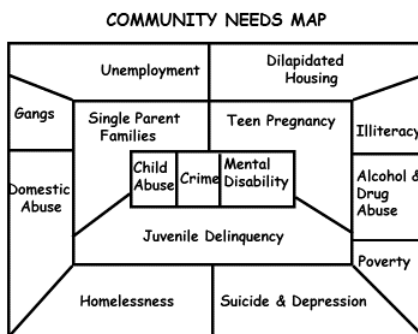
7.3 Community Resources

Small group activity: Finding Community Partners (30 minutes)

Thinking about disability legislation and accommodations we also recognize that there are support services and organizations available in every community. We may not be aware of them – or, more likely, we probably know about them but have not considered collaborating with them.

It will be helpful to think about community resources very broadly, beyond organizations and institutions. I would like to introduce a different approach to thinking about community resources, called Asset Based Community Development, or ABCD for short.

Slide: Community Needs Map



Text:

Usually when we discuss the need for services we start with a community needs assessment. Here we see a map of community needs. It reflects groups of people who are dealing with social issues and other deficits. The ABCD approach moves away from this deficit approach to an asset-based model.

Slide: From Needs to Assets

NEEDS	ASSETS
Focuses on deficiencies	Focuses on effectiveness
Results in fragmentation of responses to local needs	Builds interdependencies
Makes people consumer of services; builds dependence	Identifies ways that people can give their talents
Residents have little voices in deciding how to address local concerns	Seeks to empower people

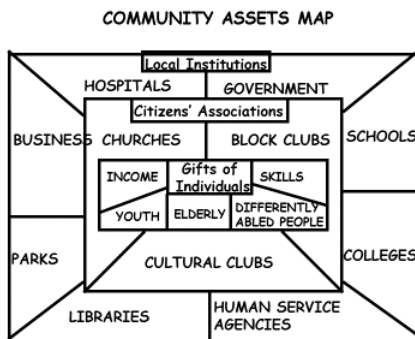


Text:

Needs focus on deficiencies. This approach fragments community responses to needs – different services and experts address different needs. It makes people dependent on services. Finally, people usually do not have a lot of say about how issues are being addressed.

In contrast, an asset-based approach focuses on what works and builds interdependence and collaboration. It builds on people’s strengths and talents and seeks to empower people.

Slide: Community Assets Map



Text:

Let’s take a look at the community assets map. We see three different layers.

- In the center we have the talents and gifts of individuals.
- The next layer involves citizens’ associations. This is an interesting category to think about. Many of us belong to clubs or associations that focus on a common interest or passion. These informal associations are plentiful: There are religious groups, book clubs, sports teams, neighborhood groups, political groups, and advocacy/support groups. Often we overlook these groups because they are not formally organized with paid staff. But they can be very helpful in providing local support and resources.

- Finally, the third layer is comprised of institutions, including educational institutions, human service agencies, public and private organizations, business, government, and public spaces. We usually look to these institutions to address local needs.

Let's put the community assets hat on when we discuss potential community partners that could provide resources and support.

Form small groups by county or community. Hand out large sheets of newsprint and markers. Give them 15-20 min.

In your groups, think about and identify support services for youth living with disabilities, considering the range of disabilities we discussed earlier. And don't forget to think about informal groups or associations. You can also search on the internet if you are not sure what's available in your community. List the agencies and associations and the services they offer on the newsprint.

Debrief by group/community. Ask for clarifying questions; highlight some common agencies that are represented in most communities. Refer to handout "Inclusive Program Environments Resources: Section 7" for additional information on community services.

When approaching these services, what would you ask of them?

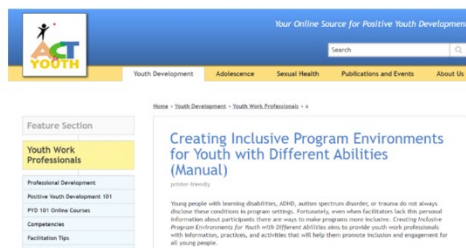
Facilitate a brief discussion.

Key points: learn about disabilities (professional development), help in adapting activities or providing accommodations.

7.4 Wrap Up

Slide: Resources

Resources



http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/inclusive-environments.cfm

Text:

As we come to the end of this training, I want to point you to some resources from ACT for Youth, the training developer.

Here is where you can find the training manual, two complementary presentations, and all the handouts.

Open web page. Highlight the training manual and online presentations. Point out the complete “Inclusive Program Environments Resources” PDF; recommend that participants open that PDF online so they can click through the links to access all the web resources directly.

Review a few other resources in this section of the website, such as the PYD trainings and the SEL Toolkit.

Wrap up activity (15 minutes)

Thank you all for participating in today’s training. Let’s end in the spirit of the training with an opportunity to express a few affirmations and takeaways from the training.

Slide: Wrapping up

Wrapping Up

I feel...

I learned...

I never knew...

I now understand...

I wish...

I’m glad that...

I appreciate

Text:

Ask participants to come to an open space and form a circle. Join the circle with a soft ball.

We’ll pass the ball around so each of you has a chance to reflect on the training experience. The slide gives a few prompts to think about your takeaways. Feel free to start differently.

Call one participant by name and throw the ball to them (indicating it’s their turn to talk). Participate in the reflection activity yourself. Thank all participants for attending the training.

When they are seated again, hand out the feedback form and ask them to complete it.

References

ADA National Network. [An overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act.](#)

DePaul University. [Asset Based Community Development \(ABCD\) Institute](#)

U.S. Department of Education. [IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.](#)