
Youth Involvement

3.6 Preparing Adults for Youth Involvement

Objectives: Participants will understand the concept of adultism as a key obstacle to youth involvement
Participants will identify strategies to overcome adultism

Material: Newsprint, markers

Slides: Adultism

Adult Allies

Handout: 3.6. A. Adultism & Adult Allies

3.6. B. Youth Adult Partnerships: What Does it Take?

3.6. C. Youth Adult Partnerships: Making Meetings Work

Time: 50 minutes

Audience: General

Lesson Plan

What does it take to make youth involvement really work? How do we create effective youth adult partnerships? Are we as adults really ready for this? How do we honestly view young people? These are all very important questions. We need to think about those before we start involving young people.

Step 1 > Brief lecturette (10 min)

Read the following statements one at a time.

- You are too young to understand.
- Not now, I do not have the time.
- Children should be seen and not heard.
- Pay attention when I am talking to you!

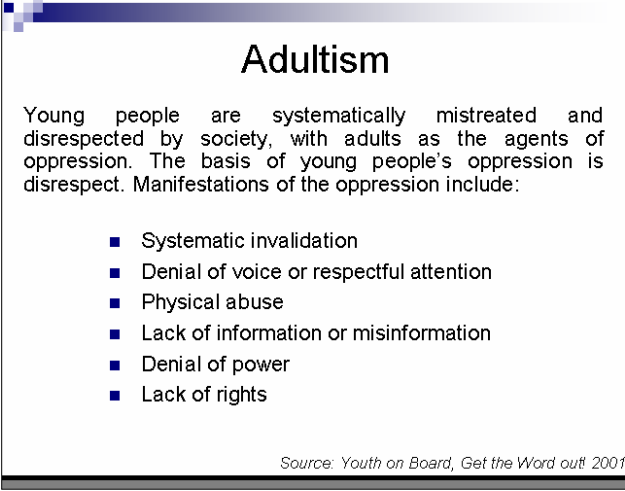
Does this sound familiar to you? Think back to your adolescence, how did adults relate to you? What did they say?

Ask participants to call out examples. How did that make you feel?

Process comments; highlight theme of disrespect and oppression.

We call the oppression of young people by adults adultism. Here is a definition.

Slide - Adulthood



Adulthood

Young people are systematically mistreated and disrespected by society, with adults as the agents of oppression. The basis of young people's oppression is disrespect. Manifestations of the oppression include:

- Systematic invalidation
- Denial of voice or respectful attention
- Physical abuse
- Lack of information or misinformation
- Denial of power
- Lack of rights

Source: Youth on Board, Get the Word out! 2001

Talking Points:

Read definition... The term oppression might be a disturbing term to some since as adults we usually have good intentions and want to protect young people. But when we look at how we treat children and young people at times, it describes what we do. Use some of the comments made earlier to illustrate the different manifestations of oppression listed on the slide.

Ask if there are any clarification questions. Lead into the next activity.

With this in mind, let's think about instances in your life where you might have been adultist.

Step 2> Small group activity (15 min)

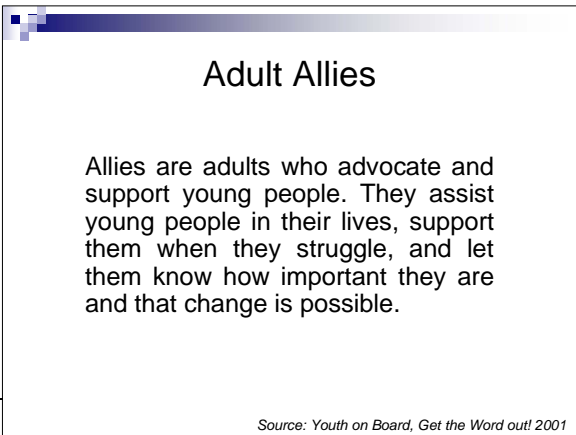
Team up with a neighbor. Think about a time that you did not give young people your full respect – at work or at home. It can be a subtle way, like being “too busy” to pay attention. Share this incident with your partner (10 min)

Ask participants to volunteer expressions of disrespect. Highlight that adultism can be very subtle, even non-verbal; it can happen despite good intentions.

Step 3> Team activity (20 min)

If we want to involve young people, we have to address adultism and become allies

Slide - Adult Allies



Adult Allies

Allies are adults who advocate and support young people. They assist young people in their lives, support them when they struggle, and let them know how important they are and that change is possible.

Source: Youth on Board, Get the Word out! 2001

Partner with your neighbor on the other side. Think about a time when you were an excellent ally to young people and gave them your full respect. Be specific about the support you gave them. What did you do? Share this experience with your partner (10 min).

Process. Identify strategies and write them on newsprint. Highlight active listening as a key strategy.

Being an adult ally is a different role than a parent. Our ideas and assumptions about youth adult relationships tend to reflect parent child relationships or teacher student relationships. That is what we know best given our experiences as a child and as parent or teacher. This is something we should keep in mind and reflect on periodically.

Skills and opportunities that might help us become adult allies (write them down on newsprint as you present them)

- self-reflection
- active listening
- teambuilding, cooperative learning
- knowledge of adolescent development
- cultural sensitivity

Ask for comments and observations. Distribute handouts: 3.6.A and 3.6.B.

Helpful resources: Youth on Board, Hampton Youth Commission (references), Freechild Project www.freechild.org

Ask if there are any questions. Facilitate a brief discussion about a) key points participants took away from the presentation and b) how they could use some of the findings and insights in their work.

I would like to end with a quote by **John Holt**: “If I had to make a general rule for living and working with children, it might be this: be wary of saying or doing anything to a child that you would not do to another adult, whose good opinion and affection you valued.” ***How Children Learn. 1967***