

## Becoming Developmentally-Informed Providers

### Using the Youth Empowered Solutions! Framework



**Scaffolding** – *n.* a process in which a variety of techniques are used to move someone toward stronger understanding and greater independence in the learning process.

The following description of the YES! framework applies to the learning that young people enrolled in a program using this framework will experience. *It also applies to the learning that new staff preparing to support young people will experience.* In either case, scaffolding as defined above is a highly relevant concept.

#### The YES! Framework

- Involves use of multiple techniques—Evidence based practices, skill specific tools, peer support, experiential learning to support generalization of skills, etc.
- Developing multiple skills that, when integrated increase understanding and independence
- Balancing the needs to take risks with maintaining safety.
- With the goal of enabling young people to move toward successful adulthood.

Scaffolding skills happens in a variety of ways.

### Enhancing assessment, planning and implementation procedures

This paper assumes that staff learning about the YES! framework will be both grounded in current therapeutic techniques and enthusiastic about supporting young people who are seeking assistance in developing skills that will support them in their progress toward adulthood. The YES! focus is on supporting young people through processes that are developmentally sound. The focus on challenges that youth elected to work on, and, the use of the engage, equip and empower process were chosen *because they are developmentally appropriate.* Application of these approaches within the standard assessment/planning/implementation procedures will strengthen their effectiveness of those procedures.

### Informing experiential learning

Prior to working with the YES! framework, most providers have not been supporting experiential learning. Consequently they are somewhat surprised by the number of skills that can be missing from a young person's skill set. As a result, staff new to this line of work experience a "discovery phase" of their own. They learn, among other things, to anticipate which daily living skills and executive skills are likely to be inadequately developed and thereby contribute to mini-crises and missed opportunities. As they are able to anticipate and handle such circumstances and to build

on a young person's strengths, new staff are better able to utilize the engage, equip and empower process and smooth experiential learning opportunities.

## Increasing skills to support engaging, equipping and empowering

Soon after starting to work in the YES! framework, new staff discover which of the "3 Es" they implement naturally and which need to be further developed.

Jonathan Cloud describes an imaginary "3 Es Tool belt" with pouches that contain tools for engaging, equipping and empowering. He says we should imagine pouches with a variety of tools that can be "pulled out" to be used as needed, based on the young person. Over time and with increased experience, staff discover a variety of additional tools that can go in each pouch--to be pulled out and used, as needed, to partner with or otherwise interact with young people.

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*The learning processes described above do not happen in a linear fashion. Staff learn how to be more effective in these ways, and others, on a daily basis. They learn to be flexible, and to modify plans as they go to be as effective as possible. When staff share their experiences, professional growth happens.*

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At various times, however staff will be ready to augment their experiential learning with information about developmental processes, neuroplasticity, how to support the development of executive skills and meta-skills using components of the 3 Es process, etc.. There is a growing body of knowledge around positive development and brain function and it's fascinating stuff!

## Where to go for more information

There is a growing body of knowledge available online that describes the strides that are being made in understanding how the brain works and what influences the way that it functions. Much has been written, but the amount of material available through video is impressive.

The Guiding Documents, Tools and Youth Culture contains a number of articles that provided "food for thought" as the YES! framework was developing. Generally, the articles are on websites that include other interesting content. It's a good place to browse and enrich the scaffold of material on which one's practices are built

The [Pathways Research and Training Center](#) is a one-stop shop for information about working with youth and young adults. It's an excellent site and has online training and webinars for people interested in furthering their knowledge in a more organized way. Its well worth signing up to receive updates from this site. They are judicious about sending information and do not send material more than once a month or so.

[Jonathan Cloud](#) has prepared a significant amount of the material available in this section of the Resource Center. Jonathan is a consultant who has spent years designing and evaluating human services programs for children and youth. His knowledge of positive youth development projects and the connections between brain development and positive development is phenomenal.

Jonathan made great contributions to the YES! framework by giving us language to describe with which to describe our work more clearly. When he, first spoke to YES! staff using the words, “engage, equip and empower,” faces lit up and there was a chorus of “THAT’s what we’re doing!” Then his lit up and he said, “yeah, I know! What you’re doing is great stuff and we should talk about why it works.”

When staff described the path that young people use to recognize and commit to working on different kinds of challenges--going from physical and safety issues, to recognizing their relationship problems and emotional dysregulation, etc., Jonathan said, “that’s because....” And we better understood what we had “learned by doing.” And so it went.

As you are ready, please consult the documents that Jonathan has provided in the Implementing a Developmental Perspective section of the Resource Center in this website.

Some of it foundational, some is weighty. Use it as you are ready. Scaffolding depends upon accessing what you need when you need it.