- Wordle created by Wisconsin YES! Participants

Engage, Equip, and Empower Young People
# to Become their Best Selves

The introduction to developmental approaches to working with young people briefly described the developmental tasks/components of mental health and the skill development required to support healthy adulthood. The negative effects of childhood trauma and other disruptive events can be mediated through understanding and intentional future-focused interventions.

The transition from childhood into adulthood is challenging even to typically developing young people. For those who have had complicated histories, who have not developed trusting relationships and confidence in their skills for navigating this process, it is even more difficult. For them, the task is to reach toward their future while filling their maturational gaps and addressing their age-appropriate developmental tasks.

YES! is structured to build upon activities that are both effective and appealing to young people. The developmental tasks of 16-26 year-olds are focused on discovery and seeking self-knowledge. Consequently, emphasis on developing and supporting "youth voice" and "youth driven goals" are keys to engaging young people in services.

Research shows that the executive skills needed to manage the tasks of young adulthood emerge only in the context of safe relationships and nurturance. These are the two elements that must be addressed in relationships between young people and providers. The YES! model includes a process that focuses on activities that

Provide safe relationships in which young people can tackle life challenges,
Overtly support young people as they identify their priorities and work toward potential solutions,
Enhance the skills of young people to address their immediate challenges and move toward a future that will be satisfying to them, and
Balance the pursuit of forward momentum toward goals with the flexibility to accommodate the loss of motivation that intermittently distracts young people from their long term goals and is sometimes perceived as "not being ready for treatment."
This process has three components "Engaging, Equipping and Empowering young people" and is frequently referred to simply as "the three Es."
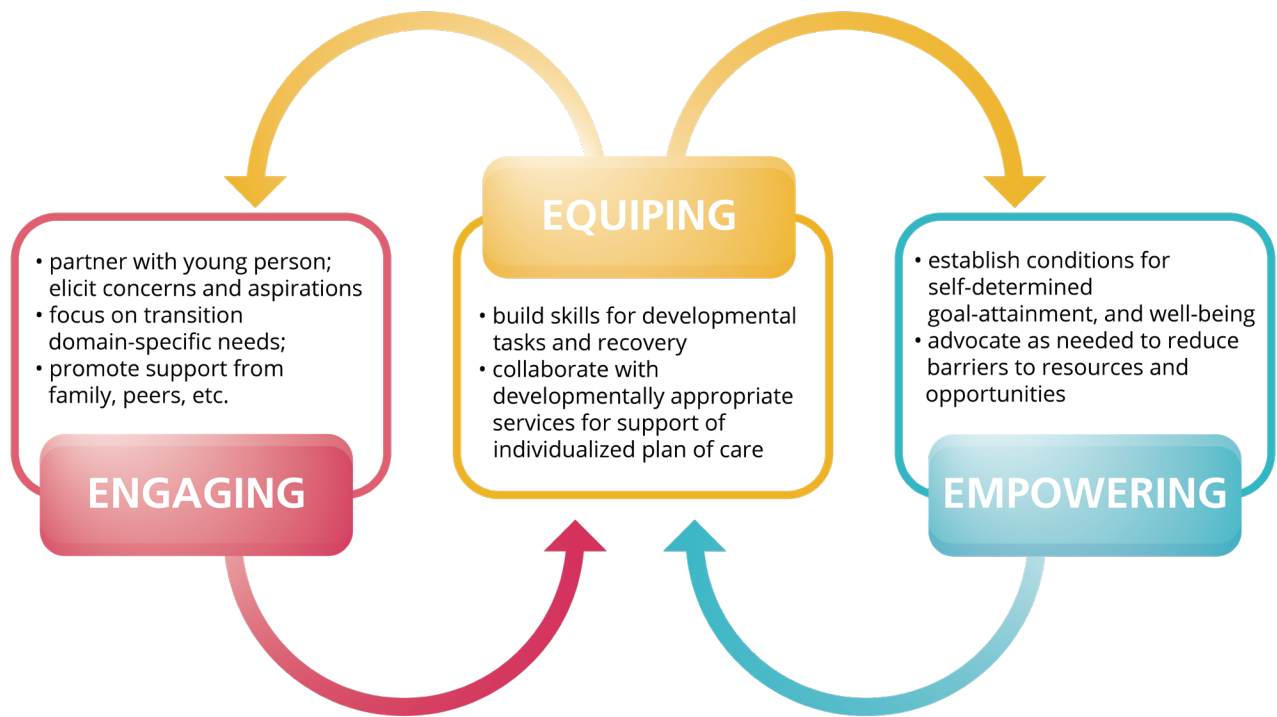
The surface simplicity of this process provides transparency regarding the roles of both young people and providers using this process. This is particularly important since young people are generally skeptical that mental health services can benefit them. In this model, there is ongoing negotiation in which young people identify the goals they want to address and together staff and young people create a consensus on how to proceed.

This introduction to the 3 Es process provides examples of how each component contributes to positive experiences for young people. Links to three examples of application of the 3 Es process to specific situations are provide within YES! A different way to deliver CCS Service.

ENGAGING

Engage refers to practices and activities that motivate and support young people as they face life challenges. This focus is especially strong as young people enter the treatment process and continues as needed. YES! strives to work transparently.

- Youth voice is paramount—young people identify life challenges that they want to work on.
- One or two staff usually assume the role of coaches or partners and provide most of the engagement. As other providers and peer supports become involved they also focus on engagement.
- The process of addressing challenges is built on a respectful process of identifying barriers, planning how to address them, a teaming approach, and ongoing discussions and debriefing that assists the young person in figuring out how to proceed.
- Throughout the process, staff roles include focusing on developmental relationships and maintaining a focus on identifying goals and approaches that are "doable," identifying good decisions and existing strengths, and offering support where needed, etc.
- The message consistently encourages sticking with the goal the young person has identified. Flexibility in approaches is encouraged. Reminders of progress already attained are important. And, it never hurts to normalize minor setbacks since learning from mistakes is a form of success.
- Struggling is shared and successes are recognized as the young person's achievements.

EQUIPING

Equip refers to assisting young people in developing skills that address their immediate life challenges and build their capacity to address future goals.

- Initially, many skills identified by young people relate to getting information to address a physical safety or social need.
- Over time, they become aware of the need to improve skills with broader application. Examples: how to plan better, increase time management skills, etc.
- Creating awareness that knowledge and skills can transfer from one situation to the next is helpful. Just recognizing that reality can be motivating.
- Identifying potential community resources for a particular purpose often results in awareness that that person could be a useful connection in the future.

EMPOWERING

Empower refers to creating an awareness of accomplishments and/or using these accomplishments to motivate oneself or others to focus on the future.

- Encouraging young people to keep a log of strategies that have been helpful can support them in discouraging times.
- Identifying small efforts that "made a difference" in an outcome is empowering.
- Celebrating small successes.
- Knowing a strategy to share with another person is empowering.
- Empowering a young person can involve participation in group activities that one has never done before.
- Sharing knowledge of resources with another young person.
- Participating on a CCS Coordination Committee.

Experiences in each of the 3 Es contribute to ongoing development of skills and increasingly good mental health.

Resources

Wisconsin Department of Health Services Youth Engagement Toolkit

Search Institute Relationships First, Creating Connections that Help Young People Thrive

Achieve my plan/AMP materials

A definition of motivational interviewing

Resilient WI Trauma informed practices

Transition to independence