Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Wisconsin Public Psychiatry Network Teleconference (WPPNT)

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Introduction to the Positive Youth Development Framework

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Objectives

• **Enduring understanding**: All youth need safe spaces and caring adults to encourage their unique interest and abilities.
• Explore the role of the adolescent developing brain.
• Understand that Positive Youth Development is a way to view young people, their needs, and the impact a community has on their readiness to succeed in our world.
When you think of adolescents, what is the first adjective that comes to mind?

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- Narcissistic
- Defiant
- Self-Motivated
- Pragmatic
- Ignorant
- Emotional
- Technological
- Impatient
- Hormonal
- Confused
- Lazy
- Disrespectful
- Entitled
- Creative
- Interested
- Focused
- Eager
- Thoughtful
- Open-Minded
- Opinionated
- Future
- Individuals

Division of Public Health, Bureau of Community Health Promotion, Family Health Section
Neurological Structures

- Limbic system
  - Nucleus Accumbens
  - Ventral Striatum
  - Amygdala
- Pre-frontal cortex

The Adolescent Brain

- Adolescence is a period of “use it or lose it” in brain development
- The adolescent brain is very responsive to its environment
- Especially malleable in adolescence

The Limbic System

- Subcortical region of the brain
- Responsible for pleasure, reward processing, emotional responses and sleep regulation
- This region is especially malleable in adolescence
• Important for executive functioning
  o Decision making
  o Moderating social behaviors
  o Impulse control

Adolescence: neurodevelopmental changes, World Health Organization (WHO) 2014

Peer Influences on Decision Making, Albert et al. (2013)
Peer Influence

Risk, Not Necessarily Risky?

• Is it possible that adolescent brains activate the same pathway when they engage in pro-social behaviors?

• Heightened reward sensitivity, in the context of pro-social behaviors, relates to a decline in adolescent risk taking.
Adolescent Development and PYD

• Problem-free is not fully prepared.
• Young people grow up in communities, not programs.
• We need youth-centered, not system-centered, approaches.

Research on Adolescent Development

• Adolescence is a time of opportunity, not turmoil.
• Normal, healthy development is uneven.
• Young people develop positive attributes through learning and experience.
• The larger community plays a fundamental and essential role in helping young people move successfully into adulthood.
What Is a Framework?

- A basic structure of something
- A set of ideas or facts that provide support for something
- A way to view an issue or topic

What Is PYD?

- Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths’ strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

PYD Math

Positive Experiences + Positive People and Relationships + Positive Spaces + Space and Time = PYD

Must Be Age and Stage Appropriate!
Opportunity Youth

- Opportunity youth are neither enrolled in school nor employed.
  - There are 6.7 million young people age 16 to 24 who are considered opportunity youth.
  - Seventy-Six percent agree with the statement that getting a good education and job is their own responsibility, and whether they succeed depends on their own effort.
  - More than half (54 percent) of opportunity youth say they are looking for full-time work.

The Causes of Opportunity Youth

- Personal situations.
  - Educational struggles
  - Incarceration
  - Teen parenthood
  - Family caregiving responsibilities
- Failure of the systems designed to support them.
  - Disconnected and fragmented youth programs.
  - Communities lack high-quality services that can reach the most challenged youth.

All Youth Need PYD Opportunities

- Youth
  - Youth who live on the street or couch surf
  - Low-income youth
  - Youth in foster care and group homes
  - Youth in the juvenile justice system
  - Youth addicted to alcohol or other drugs
  - Youth with mental or physical disabilities
- Youth in residential treatment facilities
- Youth who have dropped out of school
- Pregnant and parenting youth
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth
- Survivors of childhood sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse
The Four C’s

- Critical thinking and problem solving: the ability to make decisions, solve problems, and take action as appropriate
- Effective communication: the ability to synthesize and transmit ideas in both written and oral formats
- Collaboration and team building: the ability to work effectively with others, including those from diverse groups and those with opposing points of view
- Creativity and innovation: the ability to see what’s not there and make something happen

21st Century Skills by the Numbers

- Data is from an American Management Association (AMA) Survey in 2010
- Seventy four percent of managers said they believed the 4 C’s would be more important in the next 3–5 years.
- The percent of managers and executives who say their employees are below average:
  - 9.8 percent critical thinking
  - 13.2 percent communication skills
  - 12.4 percent collaboration
  - 19.7 percent creativity

The teen years explained, 2009
Readiness Gaps

- Achievement gap
  - Excellence gap
- Expectations gap
- Opportunity gap
- Skills gap

Readiness Practices

- Environments
- People
- Experiences
- Space and time

The Readiness Abilities

- I can think and create in ways that help me to navigate and experience life.
- I can feel and express emotions appropriately and as a way to connect with others.
- I can get and stay healthy physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.
- I can apply learning in the real world to meet life’s demands.
- I can use insight to grow and develop in each stage of life.
- I can work and stay focused in each area of life.
- I can relate to others by forming, managing, and sustaining my relationships.
- I can engage with people and places by being present and engaging in meaningful, real, and honest ways.
- I can persist through struggles and maintain hope no matter what changes.
- I can solve problems and make decisions about intellectual, social, moral, and emotional issues and problems that I face.
Prohibiting Conditions: Readiness Traps

- Access as a proxy for quality
- Age as a proxy for stage
- Completion as a proxy for competence
- Time as a proxy for progress

Skill Building for Adults

- Meaningful relationships with youth and colleagues.
- Self-awareness and monitoring on hot button issues.
- Safe and engaging space design.
- Understanding the role of motivation or sparks.
- Ability to scaffold adolescent development into learning opportunities.
- Ability to embed a helpful framework into organizational structures (executive leadership).

Skill Building: Developmental Relationships

- Express care
- Challenge growth
- Provide support
- Share power
- Expand possibilities
Programs and strategies that work!

- After-school programs
- Evidence-based interventions
- School connectedness
- Peer education
- Teen advisory boards or leadership councils
- Teen centers
- Teen-friendly health centers
- Youth participatory action research
- Mentoring
- Youth conferences

Free PYD Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Youth-Friendly Clinical Services toolkit
- Office of Adolescent Health
  - Think, Act, Grow and webinars/recordings on Positive Youth Development (PYD) training
- Search Institute
  - Use of the trademarked 40 developmental assets
  - Resource guide, one-page summaries, and research on youth engagement
- Neutral Zone
  - Agency readiness and research on becoming a Youth-Driven Space
- ACT for Youth Center for Excellence
  - Training curriculum called Positive Youth Development 101
- University of Wisconsin Extension
  - Guide on creating and sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National After-School Association
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills
- ACT for Youth Center of Excellence
- Adolescent and Young Adult Health National Resource Center
- UNICEF
- Spark Action

References

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- Advocates for Youth
- Search Institute
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