Building and Measuring Protective and Promotive Factors in Youth: The Youth Thrive Framework

Susan Notkin and Lisa Primus
Center for the Study of Social Policy
April 25, 2019
Agenda

1. Synthesis of the research on healthy youth development: the Youth Thrive Framework

2. Policy, organizational and direct practice strategies to advance healthy adolescent development

3. Measuring Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors
#SeeChange
The Landscape

- Persistent bad outcomes for youth in foster care
- Renewed commitment to focus on well-being
- New advances in adolescent neurobiology
- Increased understanding of importance of protective factors

#SeeChange
Youth Thrive: An Approach, Not a Model

• Research-based framework that applies to all youth and young adults 9-26 years of age
• National initiative focused on improving youth well-being within public systems
  • Implemented through small but significant changes in policies, practice, licensing, contracting and training
A Protective and Promotive Factors Approach

- **Protective Factors**: conditions or attributes that mitigate or eliminate risk
- **Promotive Factors**: conditions or attributes that actively enhance well-being
- **Risk Factors**: Stressful conditions, events or circumstances that contribute to bad outcomes
INCREASE PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS
- Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Youth Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social, Emotional, Cognitive Competence

REDUCE RISK FACTORS
- Psychological and health stressors
- Inadequate or negative relationships with family members, adults outside youth’s family and peers
- Insufficient or inadequate opportunities for positive growth and development
- Unsafe, unstable, inequitable environments

DYNAMIC OUTCOMES
- Hopeful, optimistic, compassionate, curious identity
- Ability to form and sustain family and social networks
- Ability to form and sustain caring, committed relationships
- Success in school and workplace
- Service to community or society

#SeeChange
Guiding Premises

Protective and Promotive Factors

Child & Adolescent Development
Social Connections
Cognitive & Social-Emotional Competencies
Concrete Supports in Times of Need
Resilience

#SeeChange
Young people are best supported by child and youth care (CYC) practitioners who understand and recognize the importance of self-awareness and self-care in their own professional practice.
Guiding Premises

Young people are best supported by child and youth care practitioners who are aware of the impact of traumatic stress and understand the need to use trauma informed methods. Trauma informed practice is a paradigm shift that focuses on trauma resolution through building resiliency. It is most concerned with what has happened to the youth and the subsequent impact to development rather than the youth’s behavior (Bloom, 1997, Bloom, Farragher, 2013).
Guiding Premises

Young people are best served by child and youth care practitioners who focus on assets and use strengths-based approaches, with an awareness of current research regarding neuroscience and adolescent development.
Guiding Premises

Young people are best supported by child and youth care practitioners who understand that attachments, connections, and relationships are a primary source of growth and learning. It is in relationships and through the use of relationships that we experience ourselves, learn, practice new skills and grow as humans.
Guiding Premises

Young people are best supported by child and youth care practitioners who:

• understand the role of race, racism and bias, and;

• the ways in which race, other identities, privilege and power shape the young person’s life, as well as the practitioner’s own life.

#SeeChange
Guiding Premises

Young people are best supported by child and youth practitioners who understand and provide culturally responsive services. Being culturally responsive means we:

• take into account our culture;
• the culture of those individuals we serve;
• culture of the larger community, and;
• the culture that is created within our programs and organizations.
Resilience

Social Connections

Understanding Adolescent Development

Concrete Supports

Cognitive & Social Emotional Competence

Five Protective/Promotive Factors Associated with Well-being
Youth and adults need to understand:

- adolescent biopsychosocial development with particular attention to brain development
- ways to promote healthy development
- the impact of trauma and healing methods
Brain Development

- Cortex: Abstract Thought, Concrete Thought, Affiliation
- Limbic: Attachment, Sexual Behavior, Emotional Reactivity
- Mid Brain: Motor Regulation, Arousal, Appetite and Sleep
- Brain Stem: Blood Pressure, Heart Rate, Body Temperature

#SeeChange
Prefrontal Cortex vs. Limbic System
Experience Shapes Development

• Brain wires itself (creates connections between neurons) based on its experience of the environment

• Causes a unique brain to develop specifically in response to the environment

• Pruning accelerates in adolescence, eliminating infrequently used connections while strengthening those frequently used
STILL TWO AMERICAS

I'M GOIN' OUT, MOM!

PUT ON YOUR JACKET.

I'M GOIN' OUT, MOM!

PUT ON YOUR JACKET, KEEP YOUR HANDS IN SIGHT AT ALL TIMES, DON'T MAKE ANY SUDDEN MOVES, KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT AROUND POLICE, DON'T RUN, DON'T WEAR A HOODIE, DON'T GIVE THEM AN EXCUSE TO HURT YOU, DON'T LOOK AT THEM, DON'T FLIRT WITH THEM.
Brain Activation

- Incoming experience is compared to existing templates of past experience
- If what we see is unfamiliar, unknown or unsafe it triggers our stress system.

**States:**
- Calm
- Alert
- Alarm
- Fear
- Terror

#SeeChange
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cortex</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Abstract Thought</td>
<td>• Concrete Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attachment</td>
<td>• Sexual Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Brain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motor Regulation</td>
<td>• Arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sleep and appetite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Stem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Blood Pressure</td>
<td>• Heart Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body Temperature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calm State

#SeeChange
### Alert State

![Alert Face](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cortex</th>
<th>Limbic</th>
<th>Mid Brain</th>
<th>Brain Stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete Thought</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>Motor Regulation</td>
<td>Blood Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Sexual Behavior</td>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td>Heart Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>Sleep and appetite</td>
<td>Body Temperature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#SeeChange
### Alarm State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cortex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limbic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional Reactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Brain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motor Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sleep and appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Blood Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heart Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body Temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid Brain</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brain Stem</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fear State

[Emoticon]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain Region</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cortex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Brain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Stem</td>
<td>• Blood Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Heart Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Body Temperature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terror State
Two Responses to Activation

- **Hyperarousal:**
  - Fight or Flight
  - Take control of the situation

- **Dissociation:**
  - Prepare for injury
  - Powerlessness
Activation State Activity

Take 10 minutes to:

• Create a list of signs or behaviors you might see in a young person that you work with according to the various brain activation states

• Create a list of approaches to support that young person according to the activation state

Calm
Alert
Alarm
Fear
Terror

#SeeChange
Impact of Trauma is NOT Permanent

• Brain cells and connections can be rewired (neuroplasticity)

• Positive relationships and experiences are critical to build new neural pathways to reach a calm and connected response state.

• Youth can rework the template they use to view the world

• Healing Centered Engagement shifts perspective from “what is wrong with you” beyond “what happened to you” to “what is right with you” - Dr. Shawn Ginwright

• There is NO point of no return – children and youth can thrive!
Resilience is the process of managing stress and functioning well even when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.
Resilience is a Journey
Healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community, and a force greater than oneself that promote a sense of trust, belonging, and that one matters.
Social Connections Offer:

- **Emotional support**
  - Affirming good problem solving skills
  - Being empathetic

- **Informational support**
  - Guidance regarding puberty
  - Applying to college
  - Entering the workforce

- **Instrumental support**
  - Transportation
  - Financial assistance

- **Spiritual support**
  - Affirmation
  - Hope
  - Encouragement

- **Identity Support**
  - Affirming race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and any other significant attributes
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING
- e.g., planning, thinking ahead and controlling impulses

PERSONAL AGENCY
- Taking responsibility for one's self and one's decisions and having confidence to overcome obstacles

SENSE OF SELF
- a growing understanding about one's own developmental history and needs

POSITIVE EMOTIONS
- e.g., joy, love, hope, optimism, trust, faith and compassion

CHARACTER STRENGTH
- e.g., curiosity, gratitude, grit, optimism, self-control, social intelligence and zest

Cognitive & Social-Emotional Competence

#SeeChange
Concrete Support in Times of Need

Not as Easy as It Seems
- Difficult for a young person to ask for help
- Think they should be able to figure this out on their own
- History of trauma or adversity
- Limited access to competent caring adults
- Missed opportunities to learn and practice important skills

Promote Help Seeking
- Coordinated support and services:
  - Individually focused
  - Culturally responsive
  - Work from a strengths–based perspective
  - Grounded in respect and trust

#SeeChange
Policy Strategies

• Rethinking consequences—no life imprisonment without parole for juveniles;
• Normalcy legislation;
• Family First Prevention Services Act (ILP and Education and Training Vouchers to age 23);
• Raise the Age
• Medicaid to 26 for youth in foster care and;
• Changing suspension policies for typical adolescent behavior
• Others?

#SeeChange
Organizational Strategies

Contracts

Training

Youth Voice

Case Plans

Others?
Direct Practice

Help Youth:

• Understand what’s happening with them developmentally
• Offer options for youth to make decisions
• Give choices about programming
• Engage youth as ambassadors, advisors, teachers, mentors
• Provide opportunities for youth to connect with peers and friends
• Create opportunities for youth to give back
• Provide opportunity for self-discovery
• Teach conflict resolution skills
• Others?

#SeeChange
Resources

- Training
- Supervisory Coaching
- Court Tip Sheet
- Transformational Relationships Paper
- Youth Thrive for Youth
Questions
How Do We Measure the Protective and Promotive Factors?
Youth Thrive Survey

The Youth Thrive™ Survey is a valid and reliable web-based instrument that measures the presence, strength, and growth of the Youth Thrive™ Protective and Promotive Factors as proxy indicators of well-being. Co-designed with youth and young adults and taking less than 15 minutes to complete, the survey can be an effective tool for informing case planning and practice, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement (CQI) purposes. The Youth Thrive™ Survey provides reports and a full array of data visualization options. Organizations will have complete access to the instrument free of charge, cost underwritten by CSSP through October 2019. Learn more in our one-pager.

Existing Survey participants may log in here.

Click here to access the Youth Thrive Survey User Manual.

To obtain a log in, please click one of the following links:

Organizational User Registration  Independent User Registration
Youth Thrive™ Survey

- Valid and reliable
- Youth self-assessment:
  - 12 to 26 years of age
  - 66 items and 11 background questions
  - Web-based instrument
- Takes less than 15 minutes to complete
- Measures positive constructs
- Multiple uses:
  - Assessment
  - Evaluation
  - Continuous quality improvement

#SeeChange
Youth Thrive Survey

Instrument Development
Focus Groups
Cognitive Interviews
Field Testing
Automation
Launch
Levels of Access to Youth Thrive™ Survey Data
Let’s Explore the Survey

https://cssp.org/our-work/project/youth-thrive/#survey-instrument

What survey questions would be useful for you to have answers to that you don’t currently collect data on systematically?
Using the Reports: Accessing Survey Results

1. Survey Summary
2. Individual Scores Over Time
3. Comparing Scores from Pre to Post
4. Cross-Demographic Analysis
5. Data Download
Questions