As a youth, what support do you wish you had from adults?

In regard to writing:

In regard to shared space:

Other:
Adult Ally Declaration of Principles

As an adult ally I will:

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Why is Youth Participation Important?

**Youth Have a Right to Participate**
The right of youth to participate in decisions that affect them has been firmly endorsed through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

**Participation Promotes Resilience**
Within the context of government services, youth tend to be viewed as problems in need of solutions. The resilience model of youth development places the emphasis on potential rather than on problem intervention. Resilience-based programs are built upon community-wide, intersectoral collaboration and are focused on enhancing competence in young people as much as reducing a given risk behavior or undesirable outcome. This approach sees youth as part of the solution, not just the focus or the problem. Youth participation promotes resilience by building on youth strengths, including energy, enthusiasm and creativity.

**Participation Reduces Risks**
Groundbreaking work by the University of Minnesota Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Health has shown that a sense of connectedness, through involvement with a social environment of family, parents, school, and community has an influence on promoting health and protecting youth from risky behavior. The Minnesota research demonstrates that youth with strong social connections were less likely to engage in activities such as drinking and driving, violence, early and unprotected sex, and drug use. Extensive studies by other research and advocacy groups, such as the Search Institute also indicate clearly that youth who feel involved, safe, valued, and connected are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

**Participation is Central to Positive Youth Development**
During adolescence, young people begin to define their own self-worth in terms of their skills and their capacity to influence their environment. It follows that in order for young people to make a healthy and effective transition to adulthood, they need opportunities to demonstrate that they are capable of being responsible, caring and participating members of society. A growing body of research about healthy adolescent development acknowledges that the environment itself must provide young people with the following basic supports:

- Safe places to gather
- Good relationships with peers and adults
- Opportunities to learn and practice the skills needed in different roles
- Constructive activities for spare time

Unfortunately, young people often have little opportunity for meaningful involvement during this key transition period. with the consequences that alienated young people often turn toward self-destructive activities (risk-taking) or maladaptive social behaviors.

**Participation Enhances Youth Health**
Youth participation offers young people the chance to develop important decision-making and problem solving skills, develop meaningful relationships, and a chance to bolster self-esteem. These benefits are known to protect youth against risk-taking behavior that impacts negatively on health both in the short- and long-term.

**Participation Improves Youth Programs and Service**
By involving youth in the planning process, those responsible for programs and services can direct available resources towards finding more successful approaches to issues affecting youth.

**Participation Promotes Commitment**
Research in community development and health promotion shows that people of all ages are more likely to make a commitment to a program when they have been involved from the outset in the program’s design implementation plans. Creating opportunities for input from specific populations, including cultural-minority youth, youth in care, and youth with mental or physical disabilities will increase the likelihood that these populations will benefit from programs designed serve them.
Commitment to Action-Participation

The Ladder of Participation is a model for thinking about youth participation developed by Roger Hart. The bottom three rungs describe youth involvement that is not true participation whereas the top five rungs describe true participation.

Degrees of Participation

8) **Young people-initiated, shared decisions with with adults** // This happens when projects or programs are initiated by youth and decision-making is shared among young people and adults. These projects empower youth while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.
   *Example: This can be embodied by youth/adult partnerships.*

7) **Young people-initiated and directed** // This step is when young people initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.
   *Example: This can be embodied by youth-led activism.*

6) **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people** // Occurs when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the young people.
   *Example: This can be embodies by participatory action research.*

5) **Consulted and informed** // Happens when young people give advice on projects or programs designed end run by adults. Young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.
   *Example: This can be embodied by youth advisory councils.*

4) **Assigned but informed** // This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.
   *Example: This can be embodied by community youth boards.*

3) **Tokenism** // When young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate. *This reflects adultism.*

2) **Decoration** // Happens when young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people. *This reflects adultism.*

1) **Manipulation** // is where adults use children to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people. *This reflects adultism.*

Adapted from: Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation, Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship, UNICEF
Stages of Critical Thinking

Adapted from - For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Delegation Handbook, 2007

Stage 1 - Banking: This type of thinking reflects what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire termed the “banking approach.” In this stage, the teacher is regarded by the students, and often by society as a whole, as the expert who must determine what is important to learn and how it should be interpreted and approached. The teacher “deposits” information, through predetermined lectures, into the student, who is taught to be a passive receptacle (or the “bank”). The student is typically expected to not question the information and regurgitates it back to the teacher in the hopes of getting good grades. Also referred to as the “Parrot Syndrome,” since the skill the student most learns at this stage is the ability to recall and repeat what the teacher has said.

Stage 2 - Analytical: The student develops an independent ability to critique what is said, written, and done. The student detects themes and patterns of consistency and inconsistency (at times this detection is unplanned and occurs accidentally). During this stage, the student begins to apply their developing critique to some processes (for instance, what people do and say) and products (books, films, formal government policies, and research reports) to identify connections and disconnections between assumptions and conclusions.

Stage 3 - Deconstruction: This is a form of critical scrutiny that carefully and minutely analyzes and uncovers the layers of work or text, and its relationship(s) with other works of texts. During this stage the student demonstrates focused, purposeful analytical independence by challenging information using well articulated alternative paradigms or worldviews and information that is reliable and valid (recall the “evidence from the several sources” that I discussed earlier in the chapter). The student can demonstrate an ability to uncover what is being trivialized, ignored, and censored in what is said or unsaid or written and unwritten. However, one danger within this stage is that students often will engage in this type of critical thinking to out-argue others and to prove their perceived level of high intellectual standing. It is important to remember that the best and most confident critical thinkings are the most humble.

Stage 4 - Conscientization: This is a concept that also is used to describe critical consciousness. During this stage the student:

- Listens, reads and observes with a high level of critical consciousness
- Perceives and anticipates social, political, and economic contradictions that exist in society and understands how to take critical action against the existing oppressive situations.
- Thinks, feels, and acts with independent purpose
- Is unafraid to engage with familiar ideas, worldviews, theoretical perspectives, people, and cultural context
- Thinks, feels, and acts with independent purpose
- Is willing to enter into dialogues and encounter ideas, knowledge, and experiences that challenge their preconceived notions of the world
- Understands that the world is not a static, closed system and that existing problems and challenges have multiple solutions
- Understands the principle of equifinality, which is the state of allowing, producing, or having the same effect or result from different event.
HANDOUT 5.2
The Twelve “P’s”

What can youth workers offer to facilitate youth development? What must communities provide to help youth meet their personal and social needs and build competencies? The Twelve “P’s” provide some answers for discussion:

1. PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Youth need caring, supervision, and guidance from the adults with whom they live.

2. PEOPLE: Youth need strong, stable relationships with more than one adult.

3. PLACES: Youth need places to hang out, sleep, be active, escape, and explore.

4. PURPOSES: Youth need short-term and long-term goals based on both their own expectations and on those of the adults and peers in their lives. Youth need to be depended upon to meet their goals and to be rewarded for doing so.

5. PLANS: Youth need strategies for carrying out ideas, meeting responsibilities, and living up to expectations.

6. PRINCIPLES: Youth need guidelines/values for making decisions.

7. POSSIBILITIES: Youth need opportunities to learn, test, work, explore, interact, and contribute.

8. PREPARATION: Youth need explicit skill-building instruction across competency areas (and major problem-prevention areas).

9. PEERS: Youth need other young people to identify with and relate to—others who are trying to achieve the same goals.

10. PROTECTION: Youth need safe environments; safe practices taught to them and used by adults who work with them; and assurances of protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination.

11. POWER: Youth need opportunities to be heard, give input, make decisions, and lead.

12. PROMOTION: Youth need to be expected to learn, to succeed, and to be responsible. Such expectations help youth contribute in meaningful ways.

Source: AED/Center for Youth Development and Policy Research
Adultism

A form of oppression that privileges adults over youth and children. It is a way of thinking and behaving. It is the idea that adults should have all the power to control youth, their decisions and actions. Stereotypes of what it means to be an adult and youth are concepts that re-enforce adultism in our society. Becoming an adult ally is becoming aware of your inherent privilege as an adult because of your age. It is not about giving up power or flipping the power dynamic. Youth gaining power to practice their agency, does not inherently take agency and power away from adults.