

Positive Youth Development and Youth Advocacy





Positive Youth Development

- Intentional
- Strengths-Based
- Capacity-Focused
- Relevant
- Respectful



The Eight Keys of PYD

- Physically and emotionally safe
- Belonging and ownership
- Self-Worth
- Discovery
- Quality relationships with peers and adults
- Discuss conflicting values and form own
- Pride and accountability from mastery
- Capacity to enjoy life and know success

Gisela Konopka (1973) and Karen Pittman (1991);

U of Minnesota Extension Service Website: Keys to Quality Youth Development. <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/youthdevelopment/DA6715.html>



What About Trauma?

- Bearing witness
- Survivors of trauma heal best by “discovering meaning in their experience that transcends the limits of personal tragedy” and “by joining with others in social action.”

Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery



Subtle Therapy

- “Commonality with other people...means having a feeling of familiarity, of being known... It means taking part in...the everyday. ... The trauma survivor who has achieved commonality with others can rest from her labors. Her recovery is accomplished; all that remains before her is her life.”

Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery

Why start a youth group?

- An opportunity for positive youth development
 - Uniting for friendship, community, support, growth, and fun
- An advocacy group for system reform
 - Uniting to work for themselves and other youth
- Healing and growth



Belonging

- Youth and young adults who have experience in foster care/adoption
 - Uniting as a welcoming, supportive, diverse, and inclusive team
 - Sharing varied experiences with adoption, foster care, residential homes, and kinship families



Where are the youth?

- Youth and young adults you know
 - Adolescent units, ILPs
 - Youth and parent support groups
 - Post-adoption centers
 - Residential; hospital
- Agencies
 - Audiences
 - *Self-selection*



A youth support group should NOT be...

- Exclusive or homogeneous
- Rigid about membership
- Therapy
- Using youth speakers to promote adult agenda



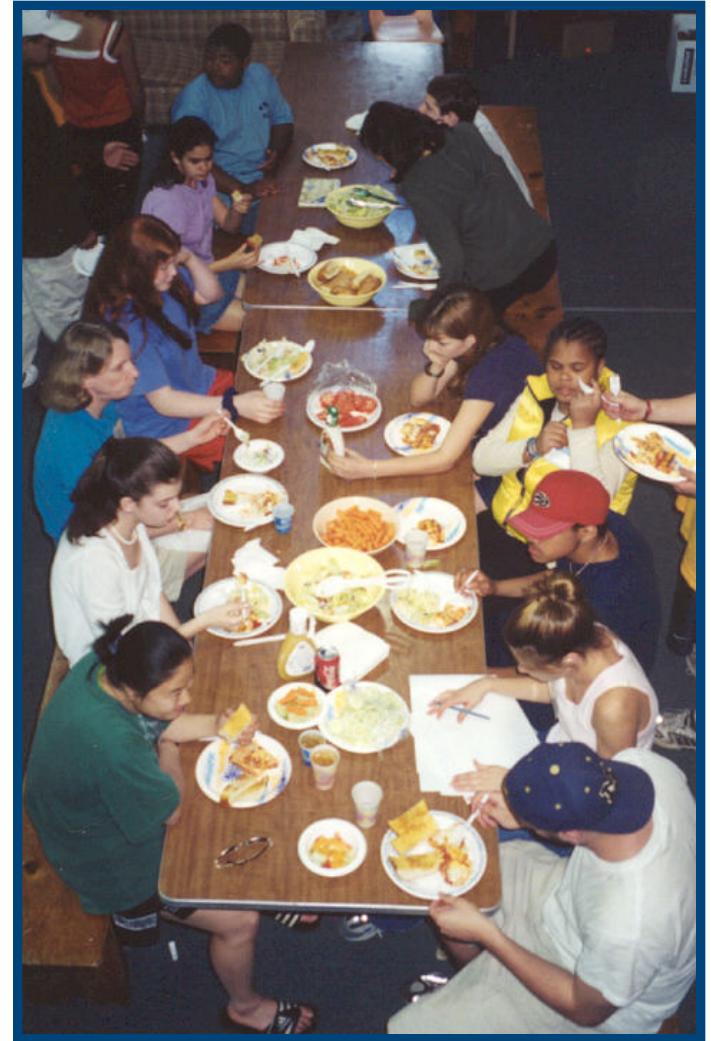


Getting Started

- Consider purpose and goals
- Secure adult leadership
- Involve youth, get feedback
- Provide training and preparation
- Kick off with an event
- Refine, keep up enthusiasm!

Challenges

- Continuity
- Transportation
- Scheduling
- System reform—
persistence amid
resistance
- Funding
- Staff support
- Relational issues





Activities— Training & Preparation

- Skill-building
 - Public speaking, creative expression
- Social connections
- Annual retreat
- Research and response
- Product development
 - Newsletter
 - Video
 - Monograph



Events - Endless Possibilities...

■ Conferences and Trainings

- For parents, workers, judges, teachers, therapists, doctors...
- National, local; self-initiated, and planned by others

■ Community Service

- Intergenerational Housing
- Holiday Party
- Mentoring
- Adoption Events

■ Legislative Advocacy

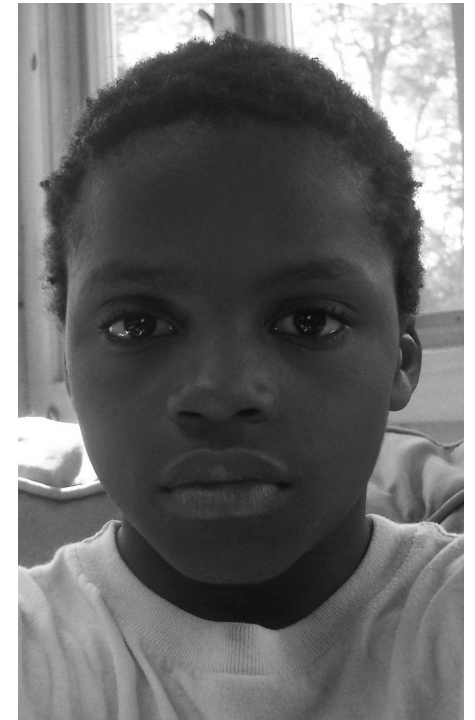
- National Foster & Adoption Month Statehouse events
- Directed testimony
- Visits and letters on specific bills
- Bill of Rights

■ Social Events

- Weekend retreat
- Potluck dinners
- Beach parties
- Amusement parks
- Art show - play

Messages and Themes

- Importance of family connections
- Race and culture in child welfare
- Openness
- Transitions and moves
- Adolescence, aging out, permanence
- Advocacy skills and positive youth development



Adult Leaders Provide

- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive relationships
- Resources
- Role modeling
- Opportunities to belong: inclusion and identity development





Youth Agenda

“When adults in power make decisions about children and youth who have been adopted or in foster care,

they need to involve us—

those who have personally experienced it.”

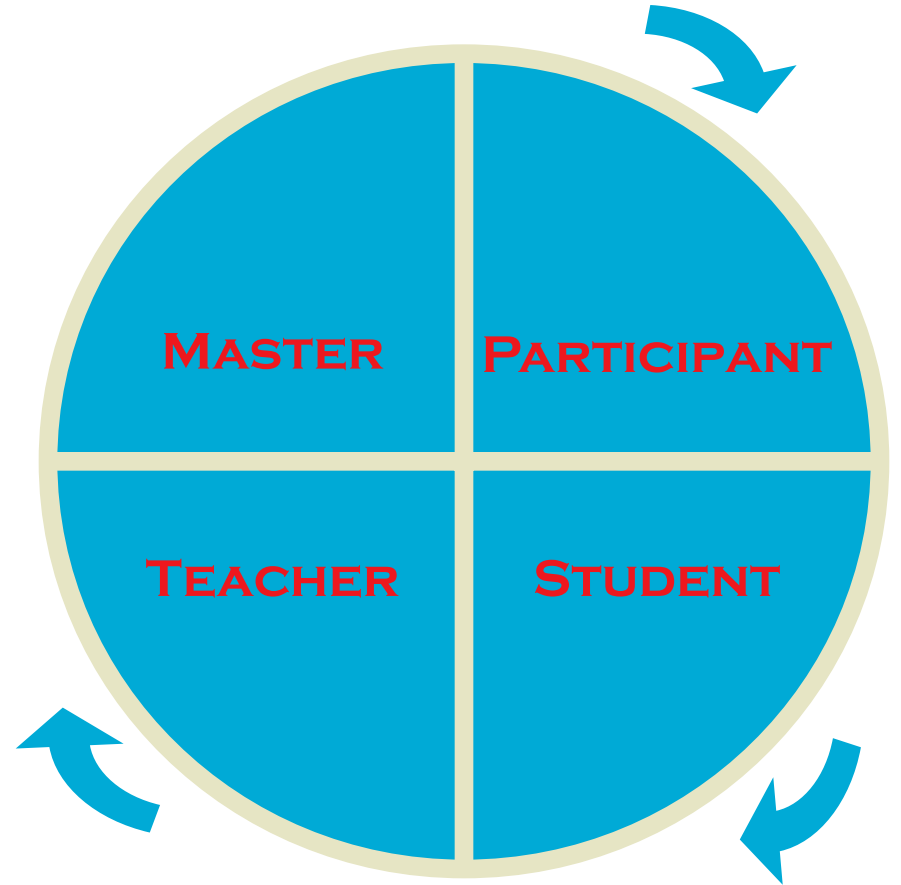


Evolution

- Youth share stories to promote changes
- Increase in well-being and self-efficacy for members — continuum of positive outcomes
- Educational, career and vocational opportunities
- Youth and adults as partners

Raising Voices for Change

- An opportunity for youth development
 - Uniting for friendship, support, growth, fun
- A partnership in achieving permanent family relationships
 - Uniting in creating and sustaining **family**
- An advocacy group for system reform
 - Uniting to work for themselves and other youth



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