



How will you manage yourself?

Working with young people is hugely rewarding whether this is your full time job or something you volunteer at; you will feel elated, have pride in their achievements, have lots of laughs, and be privy to their thoughts and feelings. It can, also, be hard work, extremely frustrating, upsetting, thankless at times and sometimes dull. These are a lot of emotions and feelings that not only do you have to understand and recognise in yourself, but then will have to deal with, so that you lead the group safely, appropriately and positively. This section looks at you and covers:

- Dealing with emotional issues.
- Managing boundaries and difficult circumstances.
- Personal development.





Dealing with emotional issues - how am I going to manage myself?

Summary

Providing a youth group or a youth club is not just about putting on activities for young people to take part in. Successful and safe groups are built around positive relationships between young people and adults, the group bonds over common experiences. As they get to know you more and feel secure with you, young people will naturally tell you more about their lives, and what is happening. Sometimes they will start to talk about difficulties, or about things at home, or how school is going, and sometimes the information is enough for you to initiate safeguarding procedures.

In all of this, you will experience a reaction to what the young person says, no-one can say how you will feel after a disclosure for instance but whatever you feel you will have to learn how to deal with this.

Things to do/consider

- Getting an experienced youth worker to do group supervision with the volunteer team on a regular basis.
- How do you cope with stressful situations in your day to day life? Where do you go for support or how do you cope, is this constructive? Use this to think about how you might cope if disclosures are made to you.
- Talking to family members generally about what is happening at the youth group; if they have a picture of what is happening they can support you when it is more challenging. However, please don't disclose confidential and private information including names.
- More training - you can never have too much if you want to do a good job.
- Getting professional help to talk through issues.

Principles

- It is human to have emotional reactions however it is professional to learn how to manage these.
- When a young person is talking to you, it is not appropriate to show them how upset, angry or disgusted you are with what they are telling you. Your role is to be a supportive listener and stay calm. Express your reactions elsewhere.
- Conversely, it is great to share your happiness and excitement over positive things in their life.
- You should not be judgemental about others, particularly other workers or volunteers - any issues should be discussed when young people are not around.
- You must always follow your safeguarding policy and procedures - so make sure everyone knows these and has regular safeguarding training.
- Talk to other volunteers when situations arise so you can work through difficult times, although any details of disclosures should only be discussed on a need to know basis.
- Have a 15 minute debrief time at the end of each weekly session once the young people have gone home to discuss any successes, issues or other events that have arisen.

Useful links



- Obviously Momentum have a range of courses that can help you, visit The Training Hub - <http://www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk/our-services/the-training-hub/>



Managing boundaries and difficult circumstances - how do you keep you safe?

Summary

Building positive relationships is so important for achieving success with your group, however occasionally this can be taken too far and either adults abuse this position (see Keeping Safe) or they try and take on too much responsibility towards the young people, which is also inappropriate. As a responsible, positive role model you need to:

- choose the information you disclose about yourself so they get to know you without giving away lots of personal information
- not undermine the parents/carers of the young people whilst being aware of your safeguarding duties
- be professional whilst also being approachable

This is a tricky balancing act to achieve but you must work towards this to ensure the group relationships are safe and constructive. This is even trickier when you are all members of the same community.

Things to do/consider

- Thinking about how you will answer questions politely but without disclosing personal stuff.
- Agreeing as a team what you will reveal about each other e.g. you may all be happy to talk about your favorite football teams but not say what you did at school.
- Shadowing an experienced youth worker to see how they manage the relationship boundaries.

Principles

- It is better to listen and ask questions, rather than to talk about yourself.
- Know what questions you are happy to answer e.g. a wedding ring will show that you are married but if you are asked, all you have to do is confirm you are married - you don't have to say who to or for how long or that you got married in 2001 on a beach in Greece.....
- Keep in mind that anything you tell one young person is likely to get round to the others, so don't share any private information about yourself that you wouldn't be happy for the whole group to know.
- Never promise to keep things a secret or confidential - you cannot do this as part of your safeguarding responsibilities - see safeguarding.
- Remember you are responsible for the young people in your care but you are not their carers - don't tell the young people what they should do, help them explore the right course of action.
- Never take a young person back to your home - whatever your reason for doing so.
- If young people are not getting on, don't take sides - whatever you are privately thinking.
- Think about the motives behind your questions. Are you asking because you have a genuine safeguarding concern, you are building relationships with them or are you just being nosy? Think of the impact your questions may have on the young person and about other people who might be listening.

Useful links

- Momentum has lots of training courses that can help - particularly the course titled 'Professional Boundaries' <http://www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk/our-services/the-training-hub/coursedetails.asp?CourseId=468>
- Each district in Norfolk has a Youth Advisory Board which has a role in building community capacity - that is you. They may be able to help and support with shadowing and learning opportunities - check out the Youth Advisory Boards web pages - <http://www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk/youth-advisory-boards/>



Personal development - how do I get better at this?



Summary

We know that for most people reading these guides, running a local youth group is just one part of what you do and so considering your learning and development might not be a priority. However, we urge you to think about how you and other staff/volunteers will develop your skills and experience so that the young people get the best possible service and achieve good outcomes. Just like in your day job, you should think about what continuous learning and development you can do, so that you learn and build on the practical experiences you have working with the group.

Principles

- Get as much training as you can before you open your doors - at the very least you will all need Safeguarding training and at least one person with a First Aid certificate.
- Learn from what you are doing - talk to each other about what went well, what you could do better and how you would change things next time.
- Learn from more experienced professionals - ask to see how other groups do things, or ask someone to visit you and give feedback on how to improve.
- Delivering safe, fun and constructive activities does not just happen; you will learn and get better. If something doesn't work first time, talk to the other leaders about what went wrong and how you will do it better next time.
- You can never have too much knowledge - go to courses and speak to others, learn from their experiences.

Things to do/consider

- Having a 15 minute wash-up period once all the young people have left - so you can review the session and plan changes for next time.
- What worries you about dealing with young people, then find a course or a learning opportunity to boost your confidence in that area.
- Getting an experienced youth worker to provide regular supervision to the staff team.
- Talking to as many people as possible and asking them about how they deal with situations that arise.

Useful links

- Momentum is your first point of call for all things training - see The Training Hub for a full list of courses - <http://www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk/our-services/the-training-hub/courselist.asp>
- MTM Youth Services CIC specialises in providing experienced and qualified youth workers, talk to them about possibilities for supervision - <https://mtmyouthservices.jimdo.com/>

