Building Resiliency in Youth
What creates a successful community intervention that helps build resilience in youth?
Choosing to use a proven, evidenced model
Consulting with the community to hear their concerns
Researching areas where we felt we had gaps in our expertise
Ensuring proper training in order to deliver the program as intended
Creating a library (accessible to community) of multiple curricula for use in Circles and Councils
Having a variety of ways to engage youth in activities, discussions
And perhaps most importantly, good partnerships with the schools where we deliver programming is essential.
WN has delivered Girls Circle and Boys Council to 400 youth in 18 schools and 6 community groups in just over two years.
Intake Process

• We assess risk factors for a youth to be victimized and/or criminalized.

• Through in depth discussion with Guidance Counsellors, Youth Workers, Teachers and School Administration we build individual groups of 6-8 youth that we facilitate for 8-12 weeks.
Risk factors we commonly see in the earlier grades (grade 5-7):

- Poor attachment to school (learning disabilities, poor attendance, social isolation & peer harassment)
- Negative peer associations (older siblings, peers modelling poor choices)
- Addictions, violence issues in family of origin
- Parent in jail
- Lack of a healthy support network in general
- History of contact with Child and Family Services
- Mental illness (usually expressed as anxiety, depression related symptoms & some self-harming)
Risk Factors we look for in later grades (grade 8-12):

- Same risk factors as earlier grades plus...
- Binge drinking and Drug use/abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Diagnosed mental illness
- Self-harming behaviours (cutting, picking, hitting/punching oneself, disordered eating, suicide threats/attempts)
- Contact with police, justice system
- Negative peer association
- Violent behaviour (physical and sexual)
- Victim of violence (physical, sexual, cyber-bullying)
Confidentiality

Other than what we are mandated to disclose, we make confidentiality agreements with the youth where we negotiate what a facilitator will talk about outside the Circle/Council. Participants also create confidentiality agreements between each other. This supports the creation of a safe space for youth to express themselves.
We spend a lot of time making agreements about how we will work together.

Confidentiality: Every say in the circle "stays" in the circle. Anything you share is safe. The only exception is if you talk about being harmed, harming yourself or harming others.

I can pass whenever I choose.

I will only talk about my own experiences. If I talk about others, it is only to explain how they have affected me in some way.

I will not tell others what to do. I will give advice if I am asked.

I will avoid interrupting others.

I will not judge other girl's opinions.

I will participate in each circle.
As facilitators, we are there to guide the process, provide activities and a weekly theme. But the youth take ownership of discussions and offer one another opinions, support, challenges, advice.
Facilitators take a strength-based approach

• We help youth to identify their strengths and to build on those qualities in positive and productive ways. For example, a very introverted girl will be acknowledged for how she likes to really think about what she wants to say before she says it. We frame her “shyness” as part of a process that is normal and acceptable. Then we give her the time she needs to participate.
Examples of Activities:
Exploring the role your family plays in your life

All the □ in my family enjoy recreational fishing.

There is mental health issues throughout my family.

My big brothers are really good to me.

I'm the baby in my family (by far).

My cousin Vick is the oldest grandchild (by far).
Exploring your culture and the role it plays in your life
Opportunities for self-reflection and self-discovery
Opportunities to critically examine the world around you and what you believe about it
To practice thinking critically and responding in a thoughtful way

My Girlfriend's a d*** magnet My Girlfriend's gotta have it
She's hot, can't stop, up on stage, doing shots, Tip the man
He'll
Ring the bell, get her drunk she'll scream like hell.
Dirty girl, gettin' down, dance with guys from outta town.
Grab her a**, actin' tough. Mess with her, she'll f*** you up.
No one really knows if she's drunk or if she's stoned, but she's
Comin' back to my place tonight!........

She likes to shake her a** she grinds it to the beat.
She likes to pull my hair when I make her grind her teeth
I like to strip her down she's naughty to the end....
She's a gold digger now you figure out it's over, pull the
trigger.
Futures finished, there it went, savings gone,
The money spent......

- Demeaning towards women
- Offensive
- He likes her in the wrong way
- Abusive towards her
- He sounds demanding
- Write a new song that's not like this! I saw your approach!
A chance to safely explore your self-identity and self-expression
Opportunities to recognize your strength and worth

Just because I was an addict
doesn't mean I'm stupid
doesn't mean I'm a bad person
doesn't mean I'm going to start again.
I am a strong person.

Just because I have ADHD
doesn't mean I'm different
doesn't mean I can't go to university
doesn't mean I'll never achieve anything.
I am a fighter.

Just because I slept with a few people
doesn't mean I'm a slut
doesn't mean I'm the easiest
doesn't mean you'll ever get with me.
I am a woman who needs respect too.

Just because I'm big
doesn't mean I can't do anything.
doesn't mean I need LA weight loss
doesn't make me unable.
I am me.
To challenge others to see your worth

Just Because I Skateboard
Doesn't mean I Smoke Drugs
Doesn't mean I Steal
Doesn't mean I'm evil
I am Human
To think of yourself as a leader

"Dear Little Brother" Letter

Dear Little Brother,

This letter is something I want you to know. I probably have never told you how much I love you and want to be a good role model for you. But I want you to know that I would do anything to see you grow up to be the best man you can.

I want you to know that some things that you should know about growing up as a male such as some of the things but and you should be a good role model for your brothers.

People might judge you and your heart. You should always follow your heart and your doing what you want. It's best to be yourself and also, you self. And for you to do

brother
To relax and have fun
And to just be a kid –
being silly and expressing joy in life!
How you can support resilience in youth in your life...

• Youth hear a lot about what is wrong with youth today and how youth culture is awful. We need to check ourselves and our narratives.

• Youth need us to believe in them, to help them see their potential to be powerfully good; to contribute; to lead.
Thank you!
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