

Youth empowerment

with Professor Marc Zimmerman, Kate Taelman and Alicia Harris-Goodwin

Talking points

Knowledge & Comprehension

1. What is empowerment theory?
2. How does the YES programme aim to empower youth?
3. What is the difference between a teacher and a facilitator? Why is this distinction important in the YES programme?

Application

4. What questions could you ask Marc, Kate and Alicia to learn more about how they evaluated the implementation and outcomes of the YES programme?
5. What might stop a young person from taking part in or completing the YES programme? What could facilitators do to help them overcome these barriers?

Analysis

6. Marc describes how he uses comparison groups within his research. For example, he compares outcomes for participants in the course with those who have not completed the course. Why is it important to use comparison groups, and why might the research be unreliable without them?
7. The team monitored outcomes for regular participants both three months after completion of the programme and one year later. Why do you think they looked at two different time periods?
8. Why do you think the team found a reduction in violent crime near to YES projects such as murals and community gardens?

Evaluation

9. What aspects of a career in youth empowerment would you find most interesting? What skills do you already have that could help you on this career path? What skills do you need to develop?
10. To what extent do you feel empowered to make change within your community? What issues in your community would you like to address, and how would you address them?

Activities

1. In a small group, list different problems that frustrate you or that you feel helpless about. Work through your list and think about the problems from a different point of view.

These discussion points might help:

- How might others see this problem differently?
- What information might I need to understand this problem better?
- What small positive steps could I take to create change?
- How would this benefit me, my fellow students and the wider community?

How does it feel to discuss problems in a proactive way?

2. Imagine that you are facilitating an iteration of the YES programme in your local area. How would you help participants create, plan and implement a project that addresses an issue in your community? Think about the following:

- How would you encourage young people to take part in your programme?
- What issues might young people in your community want to tackle?
- How would you help your participants think about solutions to these issues?
- What support do young people require to develop the skills they need to work together on such a project?
- How will you ensure that you are facilitating rather than leading?
- How would you deal with sensitive topics and the emotions that they bring up?
- What training would you need in order to safely and successfully run the programme?
- How would you evaluate the implementation and outcomes of your programme?

Use information from Marc, Kate and Alyssa's article and the YES programme website (yes.sph.umich.edu) to help you answer these questions. Create a presentation summarising your iteration of the YES programme and present it to your classmates. Try to answer any questions that they have and reflect on the feedback that they give you.

More resources

- Read more about the goals and history of the YES programme and about empowerment theory here:
yes.sph.umich.edu/about-us
- Tune in to *The Ultimate Youth Worker* podcast where they discuss topics covering tips for those working in youth work:
ultimateyouthworker.com.au/ultimate-youth-worker-podcast
- Explore the Youth Participatory Action Research Hub website which contains lots of information, advice and resources for working on projects like the YES programme:
yparhub.berkeley.edu/home