

Rethinking Relationships

Engaging Youth & Connecting Communities
Resource Guide



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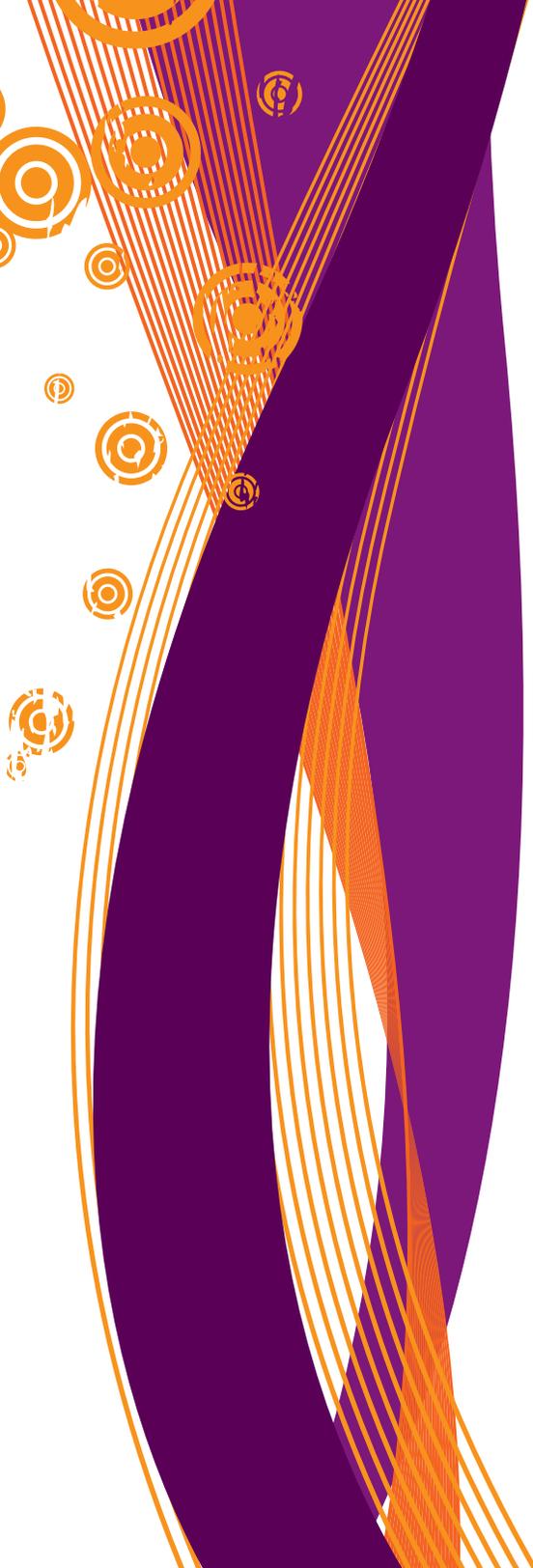


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One of the most important things *you can do is teach a youth about what a good relationship is by having a good connection with them - they can transfer that knowledge and are less likely to accept relationships where they are not treated well.*

Mentor, Interview, 2009

Foreward

Much has been written about the promotion of healthy and equal relationships. We have an abundance of books, manuals, and programs designed to assist parents and professionals in their efforts to teach children how to grow up healthy in an unhealthy world, and how to promote healthy and equal relationships in a world where inequality is deeply entrenched in our everyday lives. These guidelines and manuals commonly fall under the categories of ‘bullying prevention’ or ‘teen dating violence,’ and typically include a range of activities designed to influence attitudes and contribute to behavioural change. Many of these programs have shown great success. However, there are several limitations inherent in many of the prevailing approaches.

First, there is often an underlying assumption that the adults have the ‘answers’, and their job is to convey these to the youth. Most programs are developed by adults on behalf of children and adolescents. Such ‘adultcentric’ approaches rarely include the voices of youth in the development and design of the programs, resulting in programs that may not have the full intended impact. Second, many programs place an emphasis on changing individual behaviour, with little attention to the larger social, political, and cultural context that allows violence and inequality to flourish – and that supports and condones, in subtle and explicit ways, the very behaviours we wish to change. By not taking into account violence that is derived from racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and ableism, we inadvertently suggest that the responsibility lies solely with the individual. Third, when we use generic terms such as bullying, when in fact what may be occurring is racism, sexual harassment, or homophobia, we miss an opportunity to name the problem for what it really is. More importantly, without ‘naming’ the problem, we limit our ability to effectively stop it.

The Rethinking Relationships initiative reflects the idea that we need a paradigm shift in how we engage collaboratively in meaningful partnerships with youth. The notion of mentoring is reconceptualized. Rather than viewing it as something that someone does ‘to’ or ‘for’ someone else, it is my contention that we need to think about how everyone who engages in a mentoring relationship brings their expertise to that relationship, and is changed by it. In such a relationship, all participants have something to learn and something to share, resulting in mutually reciprocal change on the part of all those involved. To accomplish this, we need to create, in collaboration with youth, ‘safe spaces’ where diverse voices and perspectives are valued equally, and where knowledge that is derived from life experiences is considered to be just as important as knowledge derived from books and classrooms. In other words, we need safe spaces where taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions can be critically examined and challenged, where violence and inequality can be overcome and resisted, and where strategies for social action and change can take shape.

This publication builds on the excellent work that has been done thus far, but shifts our thinking and challenges us to move out of our usual comfort zones toward the promotion of healthy and equal relationships in a way that reflects the everyday lives of girls and boys, young men and young women. I am grateful to the Ontario Women’s Directorate for their support, vision, and leadership in this process, and to the many individuals and groups with whom I have been so privileged to work on this exciting project.

— **Helene Berman**
Rethinking Relationships Project Director

Rethinking Relationships

Introduction

Digital culture is creating powerful opportunities for connection and engagement. Youth are using new media in all kinds of creative ways, by seeking out safe spaces to emotionally connect with others and finding safe havens through social networks, blogs, and web forums (Meyer, 2009). While opening up spaces for reaching out, connecting and exploring – social media also exposes us to a whole new range of influences, including ones fraught with danger, risks and challenges.

For those who did not grow up in the digital age, new media exposures can seem especially overwhelming. New forms of access today are reaching younger and younger children with increasingly graphic, sexualized and violent content - in videos, games, movies, on billboards and in magazines, online and on television (Jaffe & Hughes, 2008). All new forms of access make it hard to keep up, creating an atmosphere of heightened alertness - particularly among parents and adults - to some of the more harmful, unwanted or unhealthy influences. Parental controls on home devices, in libraries, community centres and schools are typical ways of managing exposures, along with firm warnings about perceived threats and risks (online predators, for example), sometimes supplied through generic information and resources.

While these approaches may alleviate the anxieties of adults and parents, they can have the effect of alienating youth and closing down spaces of communication. Researchers who are attuned to what youth are thinking and feeling find that “youth today are growing up with a sense of adult betrayal and alienation...this is not to say that no young people have good relationships with adults, but that **when we tune in to the voices of youth, we hear the absence of sufficient holding environments constructed and honored by adults for youth**” (Powell, 2003).

What we have gathered in preparing this publication is **there really are not sufficient safe and inclusive places and spaces for youth to grapple with the real life dynamics in their lives and contradictory messages in popular**

The Girl Scout Research Institute studied internet use among girls ages 13 - 18 and found nearly one third had been sexually harassed while online (e.g. asked to have cyber sex or about their bra size). Very few girls told their parents about these incidents and said the little advice they did receive from adults consisted mainly of general precautions about online safety issues. These girls reported they wished that adults in their lives would provide them with help to avoid emotionally charged situations such as sexual harassment or online porn and to process with them when they do occur.

American Psychological Association, 2002

culture about gender roles, sexuality and relationships.

There is a particular need to ensure that youth from diverse communities are provided with spaces, both physical and emotional, where they can safely reflect on their identities and express their understandings and experiences of violence, exclusions, and inequalities (Berman & Hussain, 2008). Much of what is covered in this publication includes discussions about the context and workings of violence in young people’s lives, how to create safe inclusive spaces – ones that honour diversity, non-violence and anti-oppression- and how arts-based approaches can create amazing opportunities for critical thinking and reflection. This resource includes improvisational lessons as well as what to look for and expect from relationships, mentors and leaders.



Harris Interactive and **GLSEN** conducted a poll of students aged 13-18 and found 60 percent had been verbally or physically harassed or assaulted during the past school year because of race/ethnicity disability gender sexual orientation gender expression or religion. Over half of these incidences were thought to be based on sexual orientation alone. (Harris Interactive, 2005). Research highlights instances where administrators do little to discourage or discuss instances of sexual harassment (Powell, 2003), racism is faced by denial and dismissal by school authorities (Jiwani et al, 2002) and homophobic remarks are not stopped by school administrators.

(Meyer, 2006)

This resource is designed for educators, youth leaders, advocates, students and health and social service providers who work with youth, and anyone who is interested in creating culturally relevant opportunities mutual mentoring and shared leadership. It provides promising practice guidelines and strategies for mentoring youth using approaches that are participatory and inclusive.

Focusing primarily on youth between the ages of 11 to 14, this resource is concerned with adolescent development and how early experiences shape lived experiences as youth form and develop relationships of their own. In this respect, early adolescence can be seen as a crucial and potentially fragile moment in youths' relational lives, a time when youth are just beginning to build foundations for lifelong relationships. In subsequent sections we will explore the risks, opportunities and rewards of deeply and critically engaging collaboratively and inclusively with youth - and what this engagement means in different professional and community contexts. This will include an examination of safe inclusive spaces, age and context appropriate strategies and "uses of self" in diverse contexts.

The Toronto Teen Sex Report, released this year by Planned Parenthood Toronto, surveyed youth between the ages of 13 - 18, and found male and female youth were most likely to seek information on sexual health issues from friends even though they would prefer to get it from professional sources such as doctors, nurses and teachers, with youth from the Black, Asian, Muslim and Aboriginal communities reporting they were least likely to access sexual health services. When asked why, youth indicated they were not getting the kind of information they needed from adults they wanted to know more about things that were relevant to them, like healthy relationships and real life dynamics in their relationships.

Flicker et al. 2009

A key question underlying this resource is this - what style of leadership is required to create the kinds of spaces needed to process and filter the range of emotions and conflicting popular cultural messages about relationships? What kind of engagement is needed to open up dialogue and explore alternatives together? Generic advice and resources are simply not enough to address the range of relational challenges youth face as they begin to explore and develop intimate relationships of their own. To truly engage in dialogue with this generation of youth, and fully engage with the real life dynamics in youths' lives, an open, flexible, interactive, engaged and context-oriented style of leadership is required (Tapscott, 2009).

We talked to 25 peer and adult mentors - leaders in community, school and health settings - about what being an accessible role model means to them and how they go about forming healthy equal relationships with youth. This mentoring model draws on their experiences and insights and highlights best practices, strategies, and resources that enable youth and adults to work in partnership to design, implement, and evaluate initiatives that engage



youth in the important work of examining and challenging the different forms of violence, inequalities, and exclusions in their everyday lives and promoting healthy more equal relationships and social spaces. The section closes with their thoughts and insights.

Getting Real About Violence

Because we learn what it is to be women from *Seventeen Magazine*. Because pepper spray doesn't solve the problem. Because eight out of 10 Native women are sexually assaulted at one point in their life. Because the worst thing you can call a man is a woman. Because in high school I'm a slut if I have sex and a dyke if I don't. Because homophobia in high school kills...

Ghabrial and Shkordoff, Miss G Project

Oftentimes the kinds of struggles youth face seem invisible. In one young woman's words,

“...talking about systemic violence in our culture is akin to a fish talking about water – that it's really hard to get a handle on something that we're all swimming in all the time.”

(Steenbergen, 2008).

A very important step towards challenging various forms of violence in the lives of youth is stepping out of the swampland and getting real about the kinds of images and messages that pervade popular culture and influence our thinking about how we see ourselves and others and how these perceptions influence our relationships to one another. This section is about making the invisible visible.

We are bombarded by violence all the time through different media forms in music, videogames, television, media advertising and on the internet. Getting real about violence is about becoming media literate – that is becoming critically aware of what we are watching and hearing and the kinds of unhealthy messages we are receiving in media culture about gender roles, sexuality and relationships.

We don't often hear or talk about violence until it becomes physical and someone is hurt or killed, as in the cases of the shootings at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal and Dawson College. So often these events are decontextualized and seen to come out of the blue and the complex systemic and personal forces which gave rise to such extreme violent behaviour are overlooked.

Naming violence is also about recognizing how powerful media messages become internalized and play out in all kinds of very subtle ways through our relationships with one another often becoming aggravated by our life histories and social locations. Everyday violence in the lives of youth takes many forms, including all manifestations of verbal, physical emotional and sexual abuse. Verbal sexual harassment includes demeaning comments, insults, invasive questions, whistling, racism, harassing phone calls (Berman, 2000) or homophobic comments.

Media Literacy

■ **The Girls, Women + Media Project** is a 21st century, non-profit initiative and network working to increase awareness of how pop culture and media represent, affect, employ, and serve girls and women- and to advocate for improvement in those areas. <http://www.mediaandwomen.org>

- **Mind on the Media Information** about awareness and activism. Linked to New Moon magazine and the national Turn Beauty Inside Out campaign. <http://www.mindonthemedia.org>
- **Center for Media Literacy** is the largest producer and distributor of media literacy education materials in North America. <http://www.medialit.org>
- **Turn Beauty Inside Out (TBIO)** - a grassroots celebration of media images that promote healthy behavior for girls and boys- was created by a group of girls ages 8-16 to invite people everywhere to join us in celebrating Inner Beauty - the beauty of conviction, caring and action. Girls and boys (not to speak of women and men) need a definition of beauty that focuses on who they are and what they do, not on how they look.

This section explores the impact new media exposures have on the minds attitudes and spirits of young people (Jaffe, 2009). It looks at the “real” risks, pressures and realities youth face as they navigate life in the digital age. Focusing on some of the more unhelpful cultural influences including portrayals of violence, unhealthy sexuality and lack of positive role models (American Psychological Association, 2002), this section highlights the emotional toll for girls and boys as they begin to build foundations for lifelong relationships (Tolman et al, 2003).

Belonging: The Truth about Relationships

The Millennial or Net Generation is the first to grow up and come of age with new media technologies - the Internet, digital music, television and videos, cell phones and other interactive media. New media has transformed the social landscape of children and youth, connecting them with peers like never before, including online on a daily basis, either through instant messaging, e-mail, message boards or chat rooms, and with peer culture

through social networks like MySpace.com, Facebook and Twitter. The emergence of blogging, online zines and magazines has created incredible venues for self-publishing and convening on key social and political issues and concerns.

New Media and Digital Culture

Shameless Magazine is Canada’s independent voice for girls who know there’s more to life than makeup and diet tips. Packed with articles about arts, culture and current events, Shameless reaches out to readers who are often ignored by mainstream media: freethinkers, queer youth, young women of colour, punk rockers, feminists, intellectuals, artists, activists. Shameless has been named Best New Magazine by Toronto alt-weekly NOW, won an Utne award for Best Personal Life Writing. Cover story “Making The Cut” was nominated for a National Magazine Award.

<http://www.shamelessmag.com>

The Riot Grrrl Online Blog is an interactive website for people that support riot grrrl music, the riot grrrl movement, feminism, and anything related to riot grrrl and/or feminism <http://www.hot-topic.org>

Redwire Magazine is run by and for Native youth. Redwire has been in print since April of 1997 and continues to be the only Native youth driven magazine in Canada. This publication is founded on the core belief that the key to healing amongst Aboriginal communities is self-empowerment. Native youth can contribute articles, poems and artwork to the magazine for publication. Copies can be ordered through their website.

<http://www.redwiremag.com>

Throughout adolescence, youth engage with new media forms in ways that foster and promote their own sense of inclusion and belonging. Youth use new media technologies to connect with peers and friends, often by engaging simultaneously with multiple forms of media

(e.g., conversing on a cell phone with one friend while “instant messaging” several others on the computer). When various media are combined, they view and engage with media between 6-8 hours per day (American Psychological Association, 2002). Most of this time is spent on computers visiting Websites, listening to music, frequenting chat room, playing games, and sending messages to friends. Their ability to critically engage with different exposures grows and expands as they develop from childhood to late adolescence (American Psychological Association, 2007).

Early Adolescent Development and Gender Role Socialization

Early adolescence (age 11-14) is an especially vulnerable time for youth as they begin to navigate a confluence of internal and external influences - puberty, sexuality, gender role development – and forge identities and styles of their own (Berman, 2002). It is a time when the need to belong with one’s peer group becomes of utmost importance, as youth struggle to “fit in” and define identities and values which will distinguish them from the adults in their lives (Berman, 2002). Popular culture plays a very strong role in shaping how these forces are negotiated.

David A. Wolfe, RBC Chair in Children’s Mental Health at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and a psychologist is an author specializing in issues affecting children and youth - including how to form healthy relationships, and prevention of bullying, dating violence, unsafe sex, substance abuse and other consequences of unhealthy relationships. Dr. Wolfe finds “in early adolescence, gender-role expectations play a strong role in shaping youths strategies for fitting in and being accepted” (Wolfe et al, 2009) and “to be accepted by peers, and avoid victimization, many youths stick to the safest route and adhere carefully to gender-role expectations” (Garbarino & deLara, 2002 in Wolfe et al, 2009).

Helene Berman, Scotiabank Chair of the Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children in London, and other researchers in the field have enriched our understandings of how race, ability, sexuality and other identities intersect with gender to influence youths experience of inclusion and belonging during this critical stage of development. The following section examines the kinds of social expectations that shape youths’ strategies for fitting in and being accepted and how pressures to “pass” affect youth differentially along the lines of gender, race, ability and sexuality.

Situating Girls and Boys in their Social Landscapes

Children’s behaviors are greatly affected by their life histories and social contexts. To understand why a child uses aggression toward others it’s important to understand what impact race, ethnicity, social class, gender religion and ability has on his or her daily experiences in school—that is how do these realities affect the kinds of attention and resources the child receives where he fits in whether she feels marginal or privileged in the school.

Brown, 2008



Over two decades of research has shown how early adolescence is a particularly vulnerable and critical time for girls. It is a time when girls begin to silence themselves, absorb and internalize popular gender images and become self-conscious of their appearance and how they are perceived by others (Brown & Gilligan, 2002). Despite advances women have made in our society, psychologists

following these trends report that popular images continue to constrain girls and young women “by putting appearance at the centre of women’s value” (Oppliger, 2008, 29) and that girls continue “construct a femininity focusing on physical attractiveness and emphasis on the male gaze in order to be popular” (APA, 2007).

Much has been written about popular cultural images of beauty, in media advertising, magazines and movies, and how destructive these influences are for girl’s self-esteem and self image and relationships with other girls. Naomi Wolf, author of *The Beauty Myth* looked at how media

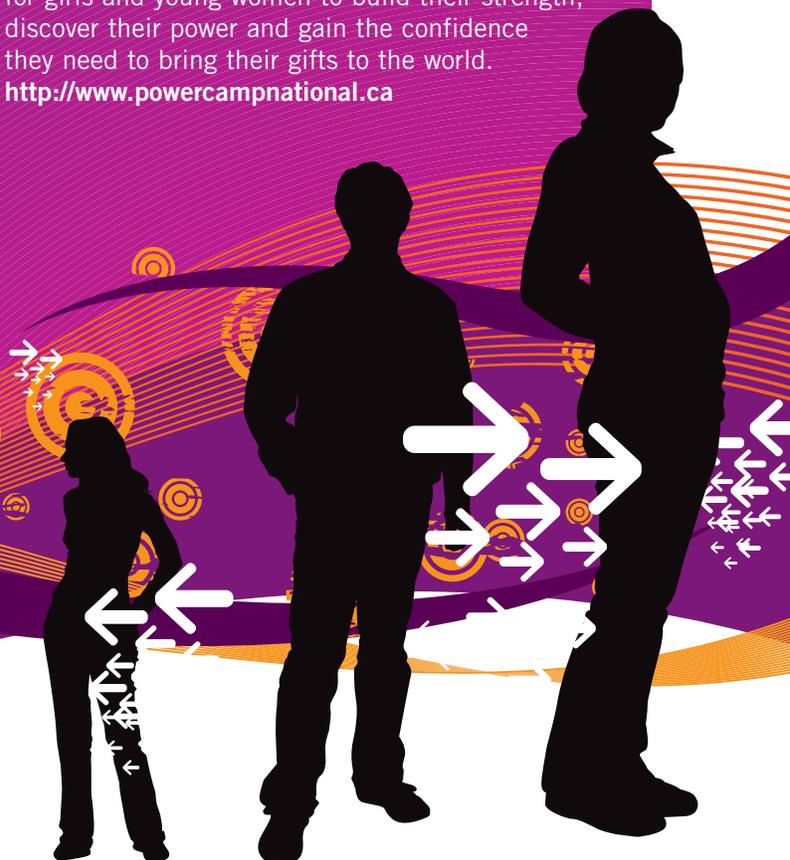
images tap into girls’ unconscious personal anxieties about one’s personal sense of worth and create an atmosphere where girls compete with one another for attention and belonging. Giving common examples like “don’t hate me because I’m beautiful”; “you’d hate her. She has everything.”; “Tall, blond, doesn’t she just make you sick?”, Wolf found these comments were indicative of the kind of self-loathing, rivalry, resentment and hostility that result from girls and young women trying to measure up to conventional images of beauty (Wolf, 1990).

Connecting Girls and Young Women with their Voices

Naomi Wolf is co-founder of the **Woodhull Institute for Women**. The Woodhull Institute Young Women’s Ethical Leadership Core Training program has been developed to educate young women who exhibit leadership potential in their careers, community or family life. These retreats are designed to connect young women to networks, mentors and resources that can channel their leadership aspirations into practical and attainable achievements. <http://www.woodhull.org>

Hardy Girls Healthy Women (HGHW) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the health and well being of girls and women. Hardy Girls programming, resources and services have been powered by the latest research in girls’ development. Read Dr. Brown’s keynote address *Cultivating Hardiness Zones for Adolescent Girls*: <http://www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org/docs/HardinessZones.pdf>

The Girls Action Foundation (formerly Girls Power Camp National) is a national charitable organization that inspires and supports the empowerment, leadership and healthy development of girls and young women across Canada. It provides opportunities for girls and young women to build their strength, discover their power and gain the confidence they need to bring their gifts to the world. <http://www.powercampnational.ca>



In recent years, we have seen an acute and well documented increase in the sexualization of young people – whereby mainly girls and young women are objectified and portrayed in mostly or exclusively sexual terms in media advertising and retail sales (American Psychological Association, 2002). Last year the American Psychological Association sounded the alarm about its impact and mental health consequences on girls (American Psychological Association, 2007).

Powerful alternative voices in music and popular culture

Ben Barry is the CEO of the Ben Barry Agency, the first modeling agency in the world to challenge the status-quo beauty ideal by representing models of all ages, sizes, backgrounds, and abilities. He has been the subject of feature interviews on Oprah, CNN, and Fashion Television and is the first male recipient of the Governor General’s Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case for advancing the equality of girls and women.

Shad (Shadrach Kabango) is quickly becoming one of Canada’s most respected young artists. His sophomore record, *The Old Prince*, was received with top reviews by music publications across the board, and snagged a Juno nomination for 2008 Best Rap Recording of the Year, as well as a spot on the 2008 Polaris Music Prize short-list.

Psychologists and educators who follow these trends, such as Dr. Peter Jaffe, Academic Director of the Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, and Ray Hughes, National Education Coordinator for the Fourth R Project with CAMH Centre for Prevention Science, are observing a troubling phenomenon – **“new media images are increasingly not about respect and equality but are directed at denigration and abuse”** (Jaffe & Hughes, 2008). Pornography is more readily available than ever before in more mediums, and the

images are increasingly graphic, degrading and violent. These trends are also reflected in video games, targeted mostly to boys - where boys are engaged in “first person shooter” scenarios and are not simply observing, they are “in on the action” partaking and engaging in simulated violence. Researchers have documented increasing intensity, realism and degrading and dehumanizing behaviour exhibited in video games, including physical and sexual violence against police officers and prostitutes, as well as racial and sexist slurs (Jaffe, 2009).

Countering what popular culture tells boys and young men about who they are

Masc magazine is a space for young men to explore how masculinity affects their lives. *masc* is curious about how ideas of manhood are shaped by one’s experiences and environment. *masc* encourages expression and connection on a range of men’s issues such as gender, stereotypes, sexuality and health. *masc* helps men imagine their own ideals and ways to make them real.

<http://www.mascmag.com>

Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity:

is the first educational video geared toward college and high school students to systematically examine the relationship between pop-cultural imagery and the social construction of masculine identities in the U.S. at the dawn of the 21st century. The new media literacy tool uses racially diverse subject matter and examples to enlighten and provoke students (both males and females) to evaluate their own participation in the culture of contemporary masculinity.

<http://www.jacksonkatz.com/video2.html>

Gender stereotypes influence **boys to behave in rigid ways and there is intense peer pressure to distance themselves from females and from any boys who do not fit rigid gender norms.** Studies of boys 11-14 find that boys use different strategies to establish their masculinity, including differentiating themselves strictly from girls, policing relationships with other boys and vilifying other boys as “gay” (Phoenix et al, 2003). Researchers observe that boys are less willing to talk about things which might be derided as “wimpish” or “soft” if other boys are present. While having girlfriends is taken as a sign of masculinity, boys who spent time with girls as friends are liable to be constructed as effeminate (Phoenix et al, 2003). In these studies, girls recount experiences where boyfriends would ignore them in front of other boys and they quietly slip over and say “hi” when no one was around (Tolman et al, 2003).

Study after study shows boys in middle and high school using highly sexually degrading words about girls in a number of contexts (American Psychological Association, 2007). Boys also talk about their genitals in front of girls and “jokingly” offer girls money for sex (Wessler et al, 2006). Students also report that some girls use the same sexually degrading words such as “ho” that boys used to refer to girls when competing for guy’s attention: “I just had this girl call me a ho, because I had been out with this dude that she wanted to go out with” (Tolman et al, 2003).

Research shows **boys are eager to separate themselves from any traits seen to be feminine for fear of being subject to homophobia themselves.** In one young man’s words, “You know when all the guys would be making girl jokes, you’d have to go along with them as much as you tried not to...they’d say “what, you’re not gay, are you?” (Meyer, 2006)

Elizabeth J. Meyer author of the book **Gender, Bullying, and Harassment: Strategies to end sexism and homophobia in schools**, shows how homophobic bullying is a gender issue - the tendency toward “feminizing” non-conventional males is reflective of a culture that shows contempt for women. She emphasizes that sexual harassment toward female peers often includes terms that are degrading toward women such as bitch, baby, chick etc and emphasizes that while boys too can be victims of sexual harassment this is mostly from other males and is usually homophobic.

The Miss G Project's Teacher Resources

An in-progress collection of resources for teachers trying to incorporate women's & gender studies and feminist materials in their classrooms.
<http://www.themissgproject.org/teachers>

Homophobia in the Lives of Boys and Girls

Sexism, misogyny and homophobia intersect in ways that painfully impact gay and lesbian youth. Elizabeth Meyer documents the prevalence of homophobic bullying and cites specific examples of homophobic harassment which includes anti gay language as an insult (e.g. “that’s so gay” or “don’t be such a fag”), and harassment for non-conformity: (e.g. you look like a guy! Or calling someone a “sissy” for defying gender norms) (Meyer, 2009).

Harris Interactive and GLSEN poll of students found that **over half of all reported incidences of harassment were thought to be based on sexual orientation alone.** GLBT students reported feeling unsafe at school three times more often than non-GLBT students and among students who identified themselves as GLBT 90 percent had been bullied in the past year. Of these 66 percent had been

verbally abused, 16 percent physically harassed and 8 percent had been assaulted (Harris Interactive, 2005).

GLBT friendly resources

Ugly Ducklings Community Action Kit: A cutting edge multi-media resource designed to educate and inspire people to take action against bias-based bullying and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The Community Action Kit includes an educational documentary film; enhanced interview footage with youth, parents, and educators; tips, discussion questions, activities, and resources for creating safe, equitable, inclusive environments for LGBTQ youth. <http://www.uglyducklings.org>

The Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line is a toll-free Ontario-wide peer-support phone line for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, 2-spirited, queer and questioning young people. The Youth Line also provides its peer-support service online through messenger and e-mail response. Confidential, Free, and Non-Judgmental Peer Support. <http://www.youthline.ca/about.php>

Research shows gay males tend to receive more physical threats while lesbians report threats of sexual violence, such as, most commonly: “I’ll make you straight.” According to conventional rules of sexuality, it is “an unforgivable transgression for girls to compete with boys for the attention of other girls”. Thus lesbians, particularly those who identify or are perceived as “butch” are punished for violating gender norms and because of their sexual orientation (Bochenek, et al, 2001). More research is needed to understand how these trends impact trans-youth and their lived experience of gender and sexual orientation violence.

Racism in the Lives of Girls and Boys

Popular images and stereotypes impact a diverse range of girls and boys - from different backgrounds, experiences and orientations and play out in a variety of ways that undermine their sense of self-worth.

Yasmin Jiwani is a professor at Concordia University in Montreal and communications expert focusing on issues of 'race' and representation in the Canadian television news. She finds that “social messages about who is and who is not desirable and what characteristics constitute “beauty” converge to affect the self-esteem and self-image of racialized girls” (Jiwani et al, 2002, 69).

Negotiating multiple identities

Anti-dote - Multi-racial Girls' and Women's Network is a grassroots network/mentoring program started in 2004 with approximately 100 women and girls aged about 13 and up. They represent diverse ages, ethnic and religious backgrounds, professions, and affiliations in the community. The Anti-dote Gurlz Club includes racialized and indigenous girls between the ages of 10-18. <http://Anti-dote.org>

Overcoming the Backlash: Telling the Truth about Power, Privilege, and Oppression is a Resource kit for community agencies, published by Status of Women Canada and targeted to Community agents/facilitators, educators. This resource is designed to expand understandings of “differences” on the basis of gender, race socioeconomic status, ability/disability, sexual orientation, language, culture, and build multiple perspectives on social experiences.

Youth identities are created/re-created as youth interact with their peers. Jiwani observes how girls who do not conform to white middle class ideals were vulnerable to taunts and violent acts and in schools are called “FOBs” an acronym for “fresh off the boat”. In talking to these

girls Jiwani finds “distancing oneself and one’s peer group from those who have just immigrated as one way to fit in” (Jiwani et al, 2002, 68). “Fitting in” for immigrant and newcomer girls can mean distancing not only from other girls who do not conform, but also from their cultural identity and community. One girl described FOB as “geeky and you don’t know how to speak and stuff.

background. One study reported a Native American boy who wore his hair long in observance of his cultural tradition. He was forced to drop out of school after boys taunted him and said “he has long hair. Very long. He looks like a girl.” (Moss, 2007)

Racism post-9-11

Since September 11, 2001 researchers have observed an increase in racist language with physical harassment directed at Muslim and Arab students. This increase in incidents is related to the intense media scrutiny of Muslim communities’ post-9/11 and the prevalence of negative stereotypes about Muslim communities that remain prominent in the media (OWJN, 2008). According to one study students may attempt to pull Muslim girls’ hijab or scarf off their heads or trip or push them (Wessler et al 2006).

Muslim Educational Network, Training and Outreach Service (MENTORS). As a community-based charitable organization of educators, youth and parents,

MENTORS is currently developing anti-Islamophobia resource kits for schools as a response to the backlash against the Muslim community. After 9/11, MENTORS initiated various events such as a panel for teachers and principals at the Toronto District School Board and York Region District School Board on dealing with Islamophobia, and two community forums for parents to discuss the concerns and incidents of racism they and their children experienced both inside and outside of schools. MENTORS was also a partner in the Toronto Response for Youth Program (TRY) sponsored by the City of Toronto. <http://www.mentorscanada.com>

You dress stupidly or whatever, right?” Systemic and internalized racism of this nature can have profound consequences for racialized girl’s sense of belonging and inclusion in relation to peers, family, community and society. In one girl’s words: “Sometimes I feel like I have to lose my true identity to fit in” (Jiwani et al, 2002, 68).

Race and gender intersect in a myriad of ways to influence how masculinity is interpreted and expressed. For example research suggests that Black young men of African-Caribbean descent are viewed in some ways as “super-masculine”, that is, possessing attributes of toughness and authentically male style in talk and dress (Phoenix et al, 2003), conjuring up racial stereotypes that cause them to be both feared and respected. In other instances boys may be targeted for not fitting with conventional notions of masculinity precisely because of their cultural

Silence is Violence

Many of the kinds of exchanges highlighted above were observed in school environments although these types of behaviours are not limited to schools. Research shows that children and youth hear degrading language, slurs, and jokes multiple times a day (Wessler et al, 2006), in hallways, waiting and common areas and other public arenas in full view of their peers and adults.

While these acts of violence are subtle, they are among the most powerful means of enforcing social control and exclusion (Jiwani et al, 2002). By using derogatory terms to depersonalize those who are seen as different, it becomes much easier to perceive them as having less value and therefore to distance and desensitize oneself to their concerns and interests (Berman et al, 2002). When this separation occurs, that person becomes

vulnerable to further abuses because it is in this moment that they are no longer seen, heard or valued. That person becomes invisible.

We have seen how the pressures to conform are enormous, particularly for adolescents, and how oftentimes young adolescents will stand by and corroborate in everyday acts of violence either to fit in with their peer group or out of fear of being targeted themselves.

Where youth are at the receiving end of verbal and other forms of harassment, they often minimize it themselves because they want to be liked and to fit in, feel unsafe, want to “pass” or at least distance themselves from what is being framed as “the problem”.

Where are the adults in all of this? Why do these incidents persist, despite the presence of adults AND despite codes of conduct in most institutions? Researchers have documented instances where administrators have done little to discourage or discuss instances of sexual harassment (Powell, 2003), where instances of racism are faced by denial and dismissal by school authorities (Jiwani et al, 2002) and where homophobic remarks are not stopped by administrators in school settings (Meyer, 2006).

While we would assume the adults present while these incidents occur are generally caring and well intentioned - the problem is these incidents are not contextualized or properly named in ways that can be meaningfully addressed and challenged. Oftentimes, incidents of everyday violence in the lives of youth are treated as isolated incidents, de-contextualized as bullying (Brown, 2008) or minimized as jokes (Berman, 2002).

To really understand how these subtle forms of violence play out one cannot ignore power dynamics at play and how one’s social location influences one’s experiences of violence. For example, a study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in London showed that although the rates of sexual harassment were similar for girls and boys, the types of harassment experiences differed by gender. Girls were more likely than boys to be the recipient of sexual jokes, comments and unwanted touching, while boys were more likely to be subjected to homosexual slurs (Chiodo et al, 2009). Researchers highlight that “both forms of verbal harassment are gender-based violence because they are behaviours involving unwanted sexual attention that is based on an individual’s gender and that serve to police and reinforce the traditional gender roles of masculinity and femininity” (Jaffe et al, 2008).

The emphasis on behaviour which remains de-contextualized and unanalyzed is a missed opportunity for helping youth develop critical perspectives alternatives and alliances with adults and peers in relational spaces where resistance to the multiple forms of violence in the lives of youth can be challenged.

Tolman et al, 2003

Early studies of sexual harassment and bullying reported very rare cases of violence as only the most extreme cases were documented. It really was not until researchers began to pay attention to some of the more subtle forms of violence such as verbal harassment, the pervasiveness of violence in the everyday lives of youth was revealed. **Hostile Hallways** (2001) was groundbreaking in documenting

the prevalence of sexual harassment in schools 63% of girls reported experiencing sexual harassment “often” or “occasionally”, with the most common form being verbal harassment such as sexual jokes, comments, gestures or looks; next most common was being touched, grabbed, pinched or brushed up against in a sexual way (American Association of University Women, 2001).

By not naming what is really going on, be it homophobia, racism, sexism, misogyny, adults and peers are sending out clear messages that discrimination will be tolerated in our society. It also closes down spaces for diversity by reducing the perimeter of safety, integrity and recognition surrounding anyone who is perceived to be different, making them vulnerable to a range of violations and abuses. Leaving them also few alternatives but to “pass” in whatever means they find necessary, including as we have seen, through means of separating themselves from anyone who does not fit cultural norms - be they boys who don't want to be considered gay, girls who are threatened by other girls or want to “fit in” to mainstream culture. This creates a hostile and intolerant environment for those inhabiting multiple intersections of difference.

Everyday Violence and Relational Development

At a time when teens are just beginning to explore relationships and intimacy girls and boys may have difficulty distinguishing between flirting and dominance and aggression. Sexual harassment may inadvertently function as a dress rehearsal for relationships.

Tolman et al, 2003

While everyday forms of violence in the lives of youth can seem invisible, the consequences of gender-based violence including sexual, racial and sexual orientation harassment cannot be ignored. These consequences include a diminished sense of self (Berman et al, 2002) poor modeling about what healthy relationships look like and increased vulnerability to more explicit forms of violence such as physical and sexual violence (Wolfe, 2009). David A. Wolfe shows how this dynamic can follow a continuum of violence and abuse beginning with early experiences of abuse. In his words **“teasing becomes bullying and bullying transforms into forms of harassment and dating violence, such that abuse and coercive**

forms of control become the critical dynamic by which relationships are defined and maintained” (Wolfe, 2009).

A slippery slope

The following exchange, described by a 13 year old girl about a fight she had with her boyfriend, which she describes as “not so violent”, shows the complexities girls face in figuring out what is acceptable behaviour, she says: “He calls me like, like, he says it so like, he says it like he means it, like, “Oh, you're such a *****. You ****, You *****. Oh, you're such a ***** *****.” (Tolman et al, 2003).

You can hear her hesitation, her halted language, as she starts to recount the escalation of violence she experienced with her boyfriend. If you listen closely you will hear that she has heard these words before, and yet this time something has shifted and she knows now he means it. She conveys so powerfully how degrading language, so casually exchanged in hallways and among peers, can become blurred from verbal slurs to escalating violence when fused with complex and confusing personal histories, anger, contempt and rage.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse:

Neighbours Friends and Families is a public education campaign to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that those close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can **help.** <http://neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/>

Kanawayhitowin addresses woman abuse in Aboriginal communities across the province of Ontario, Canada. The Kanawayhitowin website has been created to support women experiencing abuse, families, communities and front line workers to better educate themselves with resources and strategies. <http://www.kanawayhitowin.ca/>

Voisin-es, ami-es et familles est une campagne de sensibilisation du public aux signes avertisseurs de la violence faite aux femmes pour permettre aux proches d'une femme qui risque d'en être victime ou d'un homme violent, d'apporter leur aide.

<http://www.voisinsamisetfamilles.on.ca/index.cfm>

Neighbours Friends and Families resources are available in English, French, Vietnamese, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Farsi, Punjabi Perso Arabic, Punjabi Gurmukhi, Arabic, Spanish, Somali, Korean, Tamil and Russian. Click to order: <http://neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/eng/ordermat.php>

Linda C. Powell provides rich insights into our understandings of the dynamics of violence in the lives of youth, she writes: “violence is not conceived as a one time event. Rather, it is viewed as an experience that will influence what occurs next in their lives, coming at a vulnerable time in the lifespan and having impact on learning, relational development, feelings of engagement/ alienation...”(Powell, 2003).

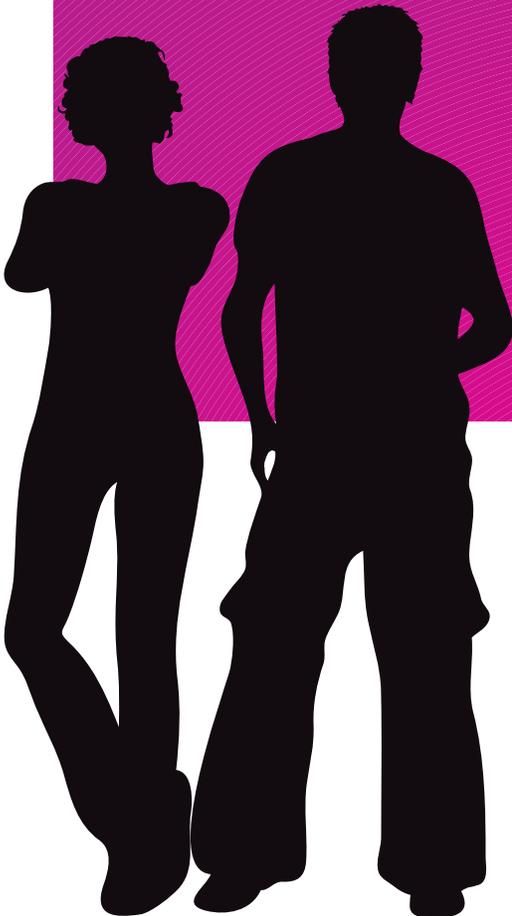
Mentoring to Promote Healthy Equal Relationships

Healthy relationships are so important on so many levels - at school, at home, hanging out. Relationships take place everywhere. But what we are so rarely exposed to: what a healthy relationship is, what it looks like and how it plays out.

Mentor, Interview, 2009

Unfortunately popular culture does not prepare us very effectively for creating healthy equal relationships, or instilling those basic qualities that contribute to building one - respect, honesty and trust, fairness and equality and good communication. These qualities must be learned, and to achieve this oftentimes there is a lot of “unlearning” that needs to take place. It also requires the support of engaged, caring and discerning peers and adults to begin to critically examine many of the unhealthy messages and unhelpful role models that are held up in the media and popular culture.

We have seen some of the characteristics of unhealthy and unequal relationships - what does a healthy equal relationship look like? The following definition, provided by Planned Parenthood, is a starting point to understanding what a healthy relationships is about.



What is a healthy relationship?

No relationship is perfect all of the time. In a healthy relationship, both people feel good about the relationship most of the time. Sometimes a relationship may need improvement. We can work within our relationships to make them better for us. Healthy relationships have six basic qualities:

Respect • Honesty • Trust • Fairness • Equality • Good Communication

In an unhealthy relationship, some or all of these qualities may be missing. And because they are missing, the relationship may feel unfair or make us feel unhappy or unsafe.

Planned Parenthood:

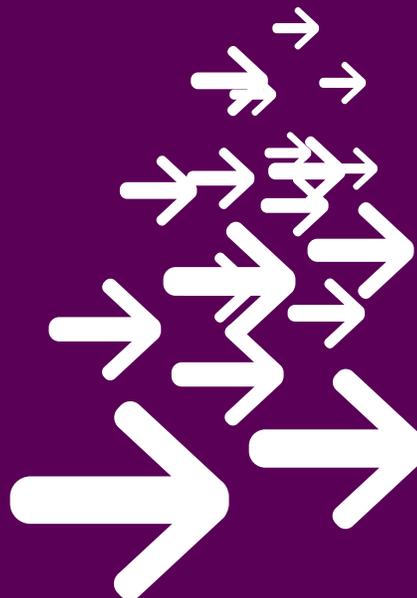
<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/relationships/your-relationship-good-you-19922.htm>

We asked 25 adult and youth leaders from across Ontario about what healthy equal relationships mean to them. The adult and youth mentors and organizations reflected in the following sections are committed to creating contexts and scenarios that connect young people to their strengths, voices, and identities, in ways that build inner/self leadership, critical thinking, resilience and healthy equal relationships. They know we can “do relationships” better and are striving to find different ways and creative strategies to promote non-violence and social change through the kinds of relationships they create, that is one person at a time.

What they share is a passion for creating culturally relevant opportunities for young people, fostering leadership and youth engagement (Crooks et al, n.d.). Their work focuses on expanding spaces where youth and children feel safe to be themselves in all their complexity. Places and spaces youth can look at their inner and outer worlds from different vantage points look critically at what they see around them and engage and grapple with issues that feel hard, irreconcilable, painful or constraining.

When you are in an abusive relationship, you forget about your relationship to your self, what you lose is self love, when you have a healthy equal relationship with someone who has been affected by violence; you are indirectly teaching them about how to have love for themselves.

Mentor, Interview, 2009



My own journey was not healthy” and it was someone then that said to me “you can do anything that you want”...at the time I was very much on the fringe I felt like an alien and having people behind me I felt like there was no giving up no matter what... when things were really hard someone said to me “there is a boat on the water moving forward it is beautiful and brilliant get in it or be left behind.

Mentor, Interview, 2009

The adult and youth leaders interviewed for this publication emphasize how very important it is to build healthy equal relationships as a counterbalance or antidote to the damaging and unhealthy messages about relationships that bombard us all the time through media, film, advertising and music. They emphasized the need to clear away the clutter and really listen to youth, thinking critically and analytically and asking questions, about what youth are seeing hearing and experiencing. In one mentor’s words:

“how we engage with information is critical - as a culture we need to critically examine and respond to what we are seeing and hearing”.

Adults don’t have all the answers and there are no simple or one-size fits all solution. What is required, according to the adult and youth mentors we interviewed – is being flexible and willing to challenge ones own taken for granted assumptions about the world “as it is”. This means looking at things in a different way and being willing to approach things differently.

The next few sections will look at what community mentors in their agencies, organizations and institutions are doing to create programs and spaces that promote healthy equal relationships. The mentoring strategies highlighted in this resource are designed to respond to the diversity and specificity of youth experiences, social contexts, and identities, and inclusively engage the knowledge and direct participation of youth. The mentoring framework highlighted in the next section is informed by a theoretical foundation of intersectionality and by a participatory action methodology.

Mentoring Models and Frameworks

Mentoring models are not a substitute for a caring family, community support or a concerted youth policy agenda. With this in mind we should ensure that mentor programs are adequately implemented and evaluated while broadening our efforts to strengthen the caring capacity of adolescents' families schools and communities.

Rhodes, 2001

Introduction

We have long known that mentoring builds resiliency (Ungar, 2008) and hardiness zones (Brown, 2001) for youth and that strong accessible role models, be they peers or adults, provide strong alternatives to the powerful messages youth are receiving from media and popular culture. This section provides **promising practices for peers and adults working with youth and features mentoring programs which are participatory and grounded in the diverse contexts and realities of youths' lives.**

This resource is designed to meet the needs of youth from diverse social backgrounds and contexts. The mentoring framework is intended to provide adult professionals with the capacity not only to engage in participatory mentoring strategies with youth, but also **strategies for working with youth in ways that appropriately respond to and reflect the commonalities and specificities of different youth identities and contexts** (Berman & Hussain, 2008).

A participatory and intersectional framework has been used to develop flexible mentoring strategies that engage girls and boys from different communities in examining and (re)thinking violence and inequalities in their lives while nurturing knowledge and skills to encourage healthy equal relationships (Berman & Hussain, 2008). The mentoring framework is intended to help adults and peers working with youth to build safe and meaningful spaces of engagement wherein youth and adult mentors can work in partnership to promote social environments and relationships that are positive, respectful, and empowering.

An Intersectional Framework

Intersectional Feminist Frameworks (IFF) are a way of thinking about power, thinking about who is excluded and why, who has access to resources and why (CRIAW, 2006). The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women has worked very hard to make intersectionality accessible as a tool for analysis and critical understanding.

They describe IFFs as fluid, which means analysis can and should change to accommodate differences over periods of time, and between places (CRIAW, 2006). An intersectional framework allows us to understand how the experiences, expressions, and **needs are shaped beyond the level of the individual.** This point is particularly important because so often the individual is the sole focus of many resources and programmes aimed at promoting healthy relationships in youth (Berman & Hussain, 2008).

Intersectionality tries to identify how different systemic conditions that vary by time, place and circumstance work together to reproduce conditions of inequality (CRIAW, 2006).

For resources on using intersectional frameworks:

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women developed **Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality.** This toolkit was developed through a collaborative process with CRIAW's partners for the Embracing the Complexity of Women's Lives Project. The toolkit has been shaped through ideas expressed through CRIAW's workshops and focus groups. It is written in plain language and offers practical suggestions and tools for applying this perspective within social justice and community organizations. http://www.criaw-icref.ca/indexFrame_e.htm

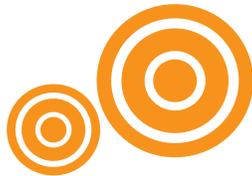
For an interesting article on Intersectionality refer to **Ms. Magazine SPRING 2009 ISSUE INTERSECTIONS** By Bonnie Thornton Dill, Professor and Chair of the Women's Studies Department and Program and Director of the Consortium on Race, Gender and **Ethnicity at the University of Maryland.**

A Participatory Model

There is a lack of critical focus on mentoring models with youth that recognize mentoring as a mutual process. There is a tendency to view the mentoring process as one that involves youth receiving knowledge from adults. Such a process does not empower youth to become active participants in changing social relations of inequality on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, class, language, heritage, religion, and (dis)ability in their everyday social environments (Berman & Hussain, 2008).

Mentoring has a shadow side that needs to be monitored to ensure that fairness and justice are built into the relationships of institutional inequity or power imbalance. Ideas of reciprocal teaching and learning and the call for mutual trust between mentors and protégés beckons us to think creatively about mentorship. Practices involving mutual learning or collaborative mentorship challenge the conventional view of “other” as the subject, the learner or the ignorant.

Mullen & Kealy, 2000



A participatory approach reinforces the view that the mentoring process not as a fixed strategy of teaching youth and imparting knowledge, but rather as a fluid and rewarding process that is negotiated by adult mentors and youth in partnership and mutual respect. It is an approach that is inclusive of youth voices, knowledge, and participation (Berman & Hussain, 2008).

Youth and Community Engagement

Laidlaw Foundation's work promotes positive youth development through inclusive youth engagement in the arts, environment and in community. It recognizes that all young people need the unconditional support of significant adults in their lives and need multiple opportunities to locate an individual talent and the resources necessary to develop that talent. Their work supports inclusive communities foster the active participation of young people from diverse social, economic, racial and ethnic family backgrounds in civic life and community leadership. <http://www.laidlawfdn.org>

The City of Toronto first launched InvolveYouth to encourage community-based organizations to involve young people in decision-making and at this time released **InvolveYouth: A guide to involving youth in decision-making**. **InvolveYouth 2: A guide to meaningful youth engagement**, is a follow-up resource which provides advice on youth engagement to organizations and staff who work with youth. <http://www.toronto.ca/involveyouth>

Serve! works with youth ages 13-24 in inner-city communities in experiential education that connects youth and the community-and positively impacts both. Youth participants with Serve! discover their true potential through developing leadership and teamwork skills.

<http://www.servecanada.org/index.php/news/P5>

Healthy Equal Relationships are based on mutual recognition and understanding. Adults working with youth need to gain knowledge and skills in how to mentor youth so that it becomes a **process of mutual mentorship and not simply a one-way street** (Berman & Hussain, 2008).

This resource enhances the capacity of adults to build relationships of trust, respect, empathy, and partnership with youth they influence in their work settings. This means looking at the diversity and specificity of youth experiences, social contexts, and identities, and that inclusively engage the knowledge and direct participation of youth from diverse social backgrounds and contexts.

Adult and peer mentors offered a variety of tips and strategies for engaging youth in collaborative relationships.



Tips

for engaging youth in collaborative relationships:

- Make sure you ask youth themselves what they need and want not only be interested in talking to program providers about what they thought girls were looking for, explore our perception of what was going on for girls
- Create environments that reflect youthfulness use forms of media that speak to youth. If it looks and feels like me I will want to be there
- If you really want to be girl focused, you need to really pay attention to what they themselves say they need as opposed to what we think they need
- Young women have the capacity... find and use contexts that can bring out that capacity
- In order to be a strong resource for young women, someone that they can turn to, it is important to be open to the issues that are of concern to them, and what they want to deal with.
- Really important that girls at any age feel included and involved at every level and phase and that the project addresses their needs
- Notice who is not coming, and ask yourself why not? Invite and include them!
- Don't just choose girls whose resumes are bursting with colour, look at girls who have not had the same opportunities, and give them a chance.

Mentor, Interviews, 2009

Innovative Community-based Mentoring Programs

This section looks at the kinds of factors and considerations that are involved in developing mentoring programs which are participatory and intersectional. There are different approaches to mentoring including, among others, individual, group, collective, peer and multiple approaches to mentoring. These various approaches can be adapted and combined in various ways to suit the needs of diverse groups and individuals.

What follows are examples of community, school and health promotion initiatives that engage youth in collaborative relationships. The adult and youth leaders reflected in this section have developed adult and peer mentoring models for engaging youth in challenging violence in their lives. These leaders work in different contexts and settings

Every group has its own flavour.

Mentor, Interview, 2009

across Ontario. Their work engages young people of all ages and stages of development, with some focusing on children and early adolescents (8-14) but it does not end there, in many cases these programs target youth well into late adolescents and young adulthood, as is the case with GLBT programming. Taken together, their work can be seen as examples for anyone interested in mentorship, mentoring models and leadership with youth of different ages and in diverse settings.

Youth and adult leaders interviewed for this resource emphasized that **the model employed is more relevant, meaningful and effective when it is conceptualized, created and refined specifically for the group for which it is intended**, that is, targeted to the unique circumstances and issues of the group or individual it engages. In other words, it is context-based. Rather than a “how to” or step-by-step model, this resource provides a framework, a critical lens if you will, for increasing one’s sensitivity to the unique circumstances, histories and diverse needs of youth in order to foster creative and innovative thinking about how mentoring programs are approached and to ensure that programs and initiatives are relevant and engaging.

You are setting yourself up for failure if it is not based on the unique history set of circumstances of each individual and group - what their needs are coming from them directly and also what you have come together to achieve.

Mentor, Interview, 2009

Accessible Role Models for Boys and Young Men

At the very time youth are breaking away from the adults in their lives and beginning to forge their own identities and connections - youth require, perhaps more than ever, the solid presence of accessible role models. In one leader’s words: “As youth break away and develop own identities, it is really important that the adults in their lives maintain connections and ties with them, hold space with them to engage, process and transmit with them.” What we heard is that an accessible role model is someone who instills the feeling of being seen and heard and the sense that people really “get” their realities, the things they are struggling with and the things that really mean something to them.

A number of programs have been developed that focus on the healthy relational development of boys and young men. Common to these programs is an emphasis on the value of accessible male role models in the lives of boys to build empathy with boys around girls’ experiences of physical and sexual exploitation and to model healthy equal relationships.

An **accessible role model**, is not a sports star or a celebrity, it is someone in a young man's life who is there for them and aligned with them in their daily struggles as an affirming role model. An accessible role model is defined as someone who is there, providing a solid and grounded presence, witnessing what youth are saying and doing and observing how youth deal with anger, conflict and stress. Someone who is respectful in their everyday interactions including with youth and they demonstrate honour and integrity. They provide

options and strategies for handling situations and are curious about youth and the worlds they occupy (Engaging Boys and Men, www.crvawc.ca).

These programs engage men who are sensitive to the challenges and barriers boys and young men face by providing tools and resources for engagement and dialogue and providing men with support and ideas on ways to model healthy equal relationships with the boys and young men in their lives.

As youth start breaking away from adults, turning more to their peers, adults assume they don't want or need this influence anymore. This is a misperception, teens do want involvement from adults in their lives, they don't want adults "trying to be like them" or "pretending to be their peers" they want responsible and non-judgmental influences in their lives.

Mentor, Interview, 2009

It starts with you. It stays with him. is an online-based, social media campaign developed by the White Ribbon Campaign and Le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions to inspire men to promote healthy equal relationships with the boys in their lives. <http://www.itstartswithyou.ca>

La campagne Ça commence avec toi. Ça reste avec lui s'adresse aux hommes qui font partie de la vie des garçons. Pères, oncles, grands-pères, cousins, grands frères, animateurs, intervenants, enseignants, entraîneurs, voisins et alliés, la campagne propose des ressources pour maintenir un dialogue et communiquer de manière positive avec les garçons au sujet des relations saines et égalitaires avec les filles et les femmes.

<http://www.commenceavecstoi.ca>

The **Engaging Boys and Men** initiative looks for creative ways to engage boys in challenging violence and promoting healthy and equal relationships by exploring their masculine identities, and understanding differential power relations. www.crvawc.ca

Additional Resources:

■ **MenEngage** is a global alliance of NGOs and UN agencies that seeks to engage boys and men to achieve gender equality.

http://www.menengage.org/default_en.asp

■ The **Coaching Boys Into Men** campaign initiated by the Family Violence Prevention Campaign invites men to be part of the solution by teaching boys that violence never equals strength.

<http://endabuse.org>

Safe Spaces for Empowering Girls and Young Women

While one goal of mentoring programs may be to foster and build healthy equal relationships between boys and girls, there are systemic barriers to this that first need to be addressed (Cameron, 2002). In co-ed group mentoring programs, group mentors and facilitators find that girls who struggle to find their voices in relationship very often will pull back and become silent, whereas these same girls are very vocal in girl only spaces (Cameron, 2002). One of the mentors we interviewed referred to this as the “tyranny of niceness” whereby **girls struggle to express themselves while maintaining relationships**, particularly with boys. To engage girls in ways that encourage them to more fully inhabit the spaces they occupy, and to sensitize boys to the needs of others, boys and girls may need at certain points to work separately and together.

There were numerous examples in group programs where these trends were observed - coed spaces became

male or boy dominated and girls would change their behaviour in ways that indicated they really didn't feel comfortable (for example they acted sheepish and became self-conscious about how they looked). Referring to an instance where a male facilitator was introduced to an all female group, one mentor said: **“we knew the dynamics would change, we didn't know how oppressed they would feel.”**

In instances where traditional gender roles were playing out in the group, girl-only spaces were used as a strategy to establish safe and empowering spaces for girls to express themselves. Mentors in group settings would maintain safe spaces for girls altogether or in some cases integrate both genders together at a later time after having worked through issues separately. Mentors indicated the girls love girl-only spaces and found those girls who had been in co-ed programs and moved into girl only spaces felt much safer and got more out of it. In the words of one mentor “it is more enjoyable to them, they can really express themselves...”

Sisters in Truth, Equality, Power and Strength (STEPS) is a 12-week interactive program for girls ages 11-14 piloted by the YWCA. Girls from diverse communities learn about healthy, equal relationships, assertive behaviour, leadership and building self esteem. <http://www.ywcautoronto.org>

Girl Guides of Canada partnered with **METRAC** to develop the GirlEmPower achievement badge to recognize the completion of activities based on healthy equal relationships. Materials for Brownies, girl Guides and Pathfinders involve girls ages 8 to 14 years. <http://www.girlguides.ca>

Girls Helping Girls is a community-based program that works with young women from various social contexts and diverse communities. This project creates safe spaces for girls to address violence in their lives and develop the necessary skills to build healthy equal relationships. For details contact Sexual Assault Centre London (SACL) www.sacl.ca.

Peer Mentoring for Affirming Voices of Youth

Peer mentoring or peer to peer groups are really rare. One of the key advantages of peer mentoring is to create safe spaces for youth without the power imbalances that come with age. **Mentors find that there can be a lot of ageism in our society and that oftentimes youth are not really taken seriously – youth often feel the need to “prove” they are worth hearing regardless of age.** Youth can also really get underestimated. As a result there can be a real power imbalance between adults and youth.

We really need to question power relations between adults and children – children and youth must be seen as humans with needs and feelings; this is at the heart of children’s rights and child prevention.

Mentor Interview, 2009.

Mentors emphasized that it is really important to facilitate youth engagement and train young people to be facilitators. This way youth decide what they need and are front and centre, creating more of an atmosphere where youth can relate on their own terms and in ways that are relevant to them, energizing spaces and revitalizing and engagement on key issues and concerns. Mentors observe youth-oriented spaces can be very creative and expansive, one mentor’s words: “Peer to peer groups can have their own life and energy and what can be produced can be greater than the sum if its parts”.

Reciprocal or mutual/co-mentoring strategies are forms of mentoring, where there may be a peer group, or train-the-trainer program structure, facilitated by an older youth or an adult using a non-traditional or alternative approach to mentoring. The process is one of mutual mentorship – one where youth and adult mentors are learning from one another. The voices of young women being mentored give shape and direction to the project or initiative. Engaging youth in participatory mentoring strategies develops a

collaborative and safe space for them to name their experiences, and to build and share knowledge in ways that are meaningful and transformative.

The Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls project

mentors a diverse group of girls/young women between the ages 16-21 in the process of participatory action research. This research explores the varied ways in which girls and young women are affected by social inequalities and exclusions on the basis of gender, race, class, (dis)ability, heritage, sexual orientation, culture, religion, language, and geographic location. Girls/young women are active in the development and implementation of creative focus group and individual interview methodologies (example: group collage, critical music/media analysis, collective poems), learning about how of girls/young women located at different social intersections experience violence in their lives.

Respect in Action: Youth Preventing Violence (ReAct)

is METRAC’s peer education program. That includes peer-to-peer workshops, trainings, and speaking engagements on violence against women and youth.

<http://www.metrac.org/programs/info/speakers.htm>

H.O.P.E. Theatre Troupe (Holding on Through Peer Education)

was created, designed and produced by youth for youth ages 14-24 to address the need for outreach in the areas of HIV/AIDS and STI prevention, homophobia, transphobia, violence, and many other issues that youth face. To educate youth regarding harm reduction and health promotion strategies, and to provide a safe environment in which youth can learn and grow as members of the community. The H.O.P.E. Theatre Troupe performs in high schools, health promotion fairs and community events. Youth develop skits and perform them to their peers on a variety of topics. <http://www.acsc.ca/hope.php>

Affirming Mentors for Queer Youth

LGBT youth often experience rejection from friends and family and feel alienated from their communities. For LGBT youth living in small towns or from conservative backgrounds, this may mean leaving one's home and community and all that is familiar to seek out a more accepting environment in a larger centre such as Toronto (Grundy & Smith, 2004). This can add to their difficulties if they are without the means to support themselves they are at greater risk of becoming homeless and falling into downward spiral. Conversely, they may feel the need to be secretive about their sexual orientation and identity for fear of rejection of friends and family which can itself lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Grundy & Smith, 2004).

Organizations serving LGBT communities observe that many adults in queer communities don't know youth and have no way to know them and visa versa, leaving them both at a disadvantage. One mentor highlights that many queer couples or adults have a great deal to offer youth. One on one mentoring with a mentor from within the queer community may really enhance a youth's sense of personal identity, pride and resilience by introducing them to "different colours of the rainbow", ways of being and seeing the world. Traditional one-on-one mentoring programs in this context provide cross-generational contact within LGBT community, spaces and places where everyone has something to offer and really countering potential social isolation those of all ages may experience.

The Support Our Youth (SOY) Mentoring program run by the **Sherbourne Community Health Centre**, connects LGBTTTQ youth to safe, out, adult 'mentors' from the community.... Mentors are queer 'big brothers and sisters' who can help you explore questions about identity, sexuality and community. Mentors provide support; encouragement and a non-judgmental listening ear to talk about anything and everything going on in your life... family, school, friends relationships, etc.

<http://www.soytoronto.org/mentoring.html>

Rewriting the Script Discussion Guide written by EquityLogics: gulzar raisa charania & Tabish Surani is a discussion guide that includes a series of informal and formal activities to explore issues related to coming out, understandings of family, community pressures, religion, and strategies for building support as presented in Rewriting the Script.

<http://www.rewritingthescript.ca/index.html>

Rewriting the Script: A Love Letter to our Families is a video produced by Friday Nite Productions, a Toronto based collective of South Asians.



Engaging Youth Culture(s) through Collective Mentoring

Youth negotiate and navigate multiple identities. Racialized youth may experience differences between their own and dominant cultural norms, values and worldviews and seek out ways and spaces to safely negotiate these differences. For example youth may see their families as sites of support while also feeling pressure to “fit in” (Jiwani, 2002). In one mentor’s words:

“youth are concerned about navigating home culture and “Canadian culture” but want to navigate these differences while remaining intact and cohesive within their family and community”.

Collective approaches to mentoring create contexts and spaces where youth can negotiate their own identities within a broader community context of affirmation and support. Being known and part of the community is a key aspect of collective mentoring, and unlike traditional approaches to mentoring, where the mentor is unknown to the mentee, this form of mentoring emphasizes the importance of having a known and trusted mentor facilitating the program. In one mentor’s words:

“by working through the community and hiring a co-facilitator who was known as a leader within the community, we were able to attract participants. Trust is a really big issue”.

Through community networks, mentors engage both youth and parents in dialogue. In one mentor’s words: “our program engages parents in conversation with children and young adults. Parents need to understand what their kids are learning and know how to engage with it”. Oftentimes, mentors help family members talk to one another about gender equality, facilitate dialogue by introducing conflict resolution skills and introduce issues in non-threatening ways.

Mentors highlight that logistical challenges can be a big issue for families depending on the time and location of the events. New immigrant/refugee parents can face particular struggles with multiple demands and settlement and cultural issues. Mentors emphasize that despite the logistical challenges of getting members of the family and community together, **collective mentoring is among the most inclusive approaches to mentoring, one which provides youth places and spaces to negotiate multiple layers of their identities collectively, with trusted mediators and within safe family and community affirming contexts.**

Equality Rocks! is a project of **Afghan Women’s Centre** to provide workshops to Afghan and Iranian boys and girls ages 8-14, their families and community leaders. Materials available in Dari and English. <http://www.afghanwomen.org>

The Riverdale Muslim Youth Project is a project of the **Riverdale Immigrant Women’s Centre**, with youth-led workshops for Muslim youth ages 12-14 to promote healthy equal relationships. This initiative included a video of the workshops for posting on YouTube. <http://www.riwc.ca/>

Everybody Counts! is a **K-W Counselling** project that engaged youth from diverse backgrounds in the production of a video for posting on **mindyourmind** website. <http://kwcounselling.com>

Culturally Relevant School-based Mentoring Strategies

Depending on the particular context, history and experiences of diverse groups of youth, one's relationship and attachment to school may vary, requiring different school-based mentoring programs and strategies.

Many Aboriginal communities continue to experience alienation, dislocation and disruption in relation to the educational system as a result of residential school experiences and institutionalized racism. These experiences impact school success among Aboriginal youth (Mentor Interview, 2009). In southwestern Ontario, Aboriginal students attending school in their communities have access to a network of support, including parents who may know each other and teachers who may be connected to extracurricular activities. For students who leave their communities to attend school, they don't have these opportunities for connection leading to potential disconnection from the school community. This can create a push and pull in their lives, where their communities may not feel connected to the school and given the legacy of mistrust instilled by the history of residential schools, may not trust the school authorities. Mentors linked with this strategy emphasize it is important to bring in a common message between parents, community members and other organizations – to underline that school has the potential to expand possibilities for Aboriginal youth, and that there are spaces for youth to come into the school and transform it.

Aboriginal role models can play an important role in this process - to bring more support to Aboriginal students so that they can connect with school, be part of it and succeed. The Peer Mentoring Program for Aboriginal youth has been running at three TVDSB secondary schools in London Ontario, whose school populations include a high percentage of Aboriginal students, since September, 2007. The program connects

senior secondary school students demonstrating student success with younger secondary school students, helping to smooth the transition from elementary to secondary school for the younger individual. This model combines, peer, adult and collective strategies through conferences, workshops and other activities and provides Aboriginal youth with contexts for fostering trust and respect between mentors and mentees to enhance their sense of school attachment and belonging (Chiodo et al, n.d.).

Until recently, the experiences and realities of Aboriginal girls and young women have been virtually invisible in writings about uprootedness and dislocation resulting from the legacy of residential schools and systemic racism in Canada. Pamela J. Downe writes about Aboriginal girls' "living histories" and strengths in the face of various forms of violence resulting from dislocation or exploitation (Downe, 2006). Downe examines how the history of uprootedness and dislocation makes Aboriginal girls particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, resulting in high rates of deaths and disappearances of Aboriginal girls and young women. This legacy is in stark contrast to the child-centredness and protectedness so central to many Aboriginal cultures and traditions and Aboriginal girls' strengths and resilience. **New programs and organizations are emerging to provide alternative education using culturally competent, youth empowering and sex positive approaches to promote healthy sexuality and relationships.**



The Native Youth Sexual Health Network

is a North America-wide organization working on issues of healthy sexuality, cultural competency, youth empowerment, reproductive justice, and sex positivity by and for Native youth.

<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com>.

- “Sex Ed and Youth: Colonization, Communities of Colour, and Sexuality” published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in January 2009.

For details on this book refer to:

<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/book.html>

The NWAC Youth Violence Prevention

Toolkit is geared toward youth and services providers in a “Train the Trainer” workshop. Workshops developed by NWAC youth deal with the subjects of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Date Violence, Emotional Violence, and Bullying; the Facilitator Guide which instructs facilitators how to use the Toolkit and deliver the Workshops.

- **The Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit** contains a CD with all Toolkit materials. The workshops are made to be delivered interactively in a variety of creative ways for participants, for example; facilitators can easily incorporate their own cultural teachings within the workshop or include games using the tools provided.

<http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/vpk.html>.

Fourth R Curriculum is a comprehensive school-based prevention program for adolescent risk behaviours. The curriculum promotes healthy relationships and targets bullying, high-risk sexual behaviour and substance use among adolescents.

- **A Peer Mentoring Program** for Aboriginal Youth Implementation Manual has been developed to assist educators in creating a Peer Mentor Program for Aboriginal students at their school.

http://youthrelationships.org/curriculum_resources.html

Franco-Ontarians experience different contexts, histories and set of experiences in relation to school attachment. Francophones in the Province of Ontario have engaged in a long historical struggle to achieve French schooling for their children. There remains a lack of French services in many communities and sometimes the school is the only French language facility in the area. In smaller Francophone communities, school is the heart of the community, making it a really important way of reaching the community and playing a huge role in community building. Community groups actively work within local school community settings, meaning that all ages are involved and engaged in the school community. This creates multiple spaces for dialogue across generations.

Mentors emphasize the importance of having both structured and informal opportunities for engaging youth. For example, mentors provide workshops to groups in class

settings. They observe that after a workshop youth will approach them in the hallway, often as a group and will ask a question or talk about something they were thinking about. Usually it is very spontaneous and so mentors emphasize it is really important to seize the moment and make oneself available in this way. Students may feel much more inhibited about bringing something up in a classroom setting, particularly if the teacher is present. Because there is very little anonymity, youth will carve out and create spaces for themselves to talk with role models they trust about issues that are important to them. Here, the rapport and trust between school and community agencies are critical to ensuring youth are provided with a range of opportunities and safe spaces to address issues and challenges they are experiencing within a close knit community.

Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) ensures that Franco-Ontarian youth participate fully in the development of their community, and help other youth identify themselves as Franco-Ontarian through actions that affirm their identity as Francophones. **Pour se comprendre** is a FESFO project that includes a series of workshops for youth in francophone elementary schools. The workshops include interactive activities, discussions and role playing. Themes include sexist stereotypes, the importance of respectful behaviour between boys and girls, recognizing unhealthy relationships and finding help. <http://fesfo.ca/>

Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) is a provincial Francophone non-profit organization that addresses child abuse prevention through education and skill-building.

They offer numerous school-based programs that share a coherent and unique approach to abuse prevention education. Their whole-school programs include adult (staff and parent) and student components to facilitate community-wide change. They offer two programs for adults:

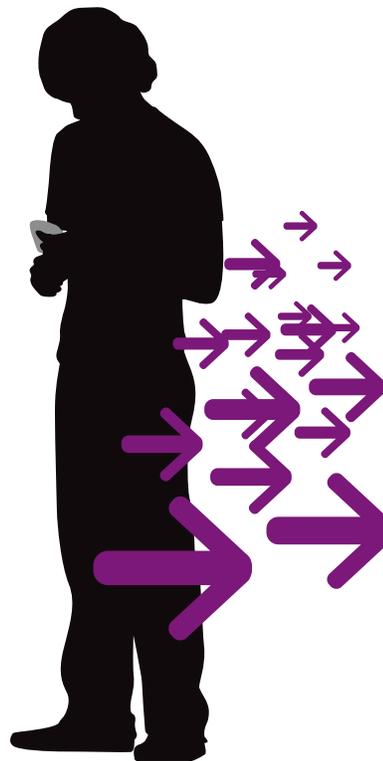
- **Power to Change** (a full-day workshop for educators and school support staff, focusing on strategies for reducing bullying among students) and;
- **Let's Talk About It** (a two-part workshop for adults focusing on workplace bullying);
- **From Tolerance to Advocacy** (a full-day workshop for older teens and adults in a leadership capacity.

<http://www.infocopa.com/english/>

Conclusion

Community partnerships are based on all the same principles that comprise healthy equal relationships - **mutual respect ~ honesty ~ trust ~ fairness ~ equality & good communication.**

Strong organizational relationships foster stronger, more enhancing, engaging and vital programs for youth. Being attuned to local contexts, the needs of youth in varied and diverse contexts and fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect are common themes that underlie those mentoring programs that really stand out in creatively and innovatively reaching youth exactly where they are in their communities.



Relationship Strategies

“Something very powerful happens when we can just listen to a story and not do anything...sending the message that the story is worth hearing, that the person telling the story is not judged, that no more harm than good came from telling the story and that the story takes on a life outside the person it is no longer festering inside...the problem has a name which can be looked at and we can align ourselves with others to struggle against it...”

Parker Palmer, 2004

Introduction

This section has been developed to convey values for working with and engaging youth in safe, meaningful, and empowering ways in order build connections between adult mentors and youth and model healthy and equal relationships. It does so by exploring ways and means of establishing contexts and environments where youth feel comfortable expressing themselves in all their complexity.

One question underlying this resource is how adults and peers make can themselves available as accessible role models to promote healthy equal relationships?

Specifically, what are some of the limitations we face living and working in community, school and clinical settings - constraints that prevent us from being fully present and engaged with youth? This section focuses on the ins and outs of safe space, including “uses of self” in school, community and professional environments. It explores the risks and rewards of truly engaging youth on meaningful levels and in ways that provide meaningful alternatives for youth.

Youth will not simply “open up” to adults on demand. Non judgmental listening is required to establish the trust needed for a youth to share with an adult what he or she is thinking and feeling (APA, 2002). Research suggests that **young people need adults who will not only listen to them—but also understand and appreciate their perspective** (APA, 2002).

What does it mean to really understand and appreciate another’s perspective? This section begins by looking at what it means to be truly present in relationship with one another, and some of the systemic barriers to doing so. Being present for and with youth means creating spaces and places where youth feel safe to express their full range of thoughts and emotions (Berman, 2002). One starts by, in the words of one mentor: **“not only listening, but listening well”**. This requires “fine tuning one’s own sensitivity” (Gokool-Ramdoe, 2005) by not assuming one has all the answers, or can fix things, but instead taking a moment to step back, listen deeply and witness what is being expressed.

Getting Grounded about Mentoring

Mentors must maintain a dual perspective in which they see the mentee as an individual as well as part of a larger social context.

Crutcher, 2007



Tips

from peer and adult mentors on building trust with youth, in their own words:

- Youth fear being judged or misunderstood it is important to create an atmosphere where they can open up
- If a youth does not want to hear what you are saying, back off and don't push, give them some space, when they trust you they will come around
- Be patient, don't force things, this could backfire and have the reverse effect.
- For those who have been exposed to violence, the fact that "they don't trust easily" is important for a mentor to have that information, and make sure they do not offer more than they can give" so

they won't be another person on the list of disappointments

- Non-judgment means meeting youth where they are
- For those girls engaging in risky behaviours, what they are hearing in relationships, outweigh what they are hearing from us...the relationship with girls strengthens what you are trying to do - it is hard to take the mentoring relationship to the next level until they trust you
- Mentors should "not take things personally"...know that if a youth cancels, it not about you or about being disrespected, it is about what is going on for them in their lives

Mentor, Interviews, 2009

Confidentiality Guidelines

Mentors in school, community and health settings come from a variety of backgrounds – as peers, advocates, volunteers, mental health and health professionals, social workers, counselors and educators. Become informed about your legal and professional responsibility by knowing your organizations guidelines or professional organization protocols. Safety comes first and youth need to know they can go to someone they can trust and that what they disclose will not be shared unless ethically or legally required.

People who work with youth in Canada are governed by provincial Child Welfare Acts in conjunction with codes of conduct for specific professions. It may be ethically and legally necessary to breach confidentiality when there is:

- Serious risk of suicide or harm to others.
- Knowledge of a child who needs protection (e.g. due to abuse or neglect).
- Required disclosure of confidential information by law (e.g. subpoena of a file).

Adapted from the Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2007

Listening well and paying attention means being attuned to some of the more practical and immediate needs youth present with. These needs may not be immediately apparent, for example children or youth may be embarrassed to tell you they are hungry or don't have a coat or a safe place to sleep. Just as a hungry child cannot

learn, a stressed out youth can be so preoccupied, they have a hard time relating to others. Youth may be struggling with personal issues, relationships issues or issues relating to sexual identity. Youth may be engaged in unsafe sexual practices, or struggle with addictions. Different contexts require very different interventions and styles of

engagement and so how these issues are addressed in a school setting or recreational organization will look very different to how they are addressed at a sexual assault centre, health clinic or community health centre. Most organizations provide training and support to staff and volunteers on how to respond responsibly and in an age appropriate manner within different contexts.

Practical Advice from mentors about meeting youth where they are:

- If someone comes and needs practical support, start with that and take to time to build a relationship with them
- Housing insecurity including unsafe or lack of affordable housing puts youth at risk (lack of affordable housing is a barrier) food and a warm place to spend time may be needed
- Social isolation of youth from diverse backgrounds, means more outreach is needed
- Groups that are more marginalized, their lives are harder and this gets played out in the group...may not have had enough sleep – this presents challenges and difficulties
- People can be hungry when they come, when we provide breakfast they are much more present and engaged and ready to be part of the group.
- Crisis: someone who is experiencing abuse or in a crisis situation, know when to connect them with other supports and resources they need and when it is appropriate to disclose abuse.
- Mentors provide that first line of contact where girls can feel comfortable.
- One girl was engaging in really risky sexual activities, unprotected sex, and she came to me and I was able to connect her with a sexual health nurse – she started taking better care of herself sexually

Mentor, Interviews, 2009

Mentors and mentoring programs can bridge youth with programs and services they need in school, community or health care settings and screening protocols are often in place to determine whether a youth requires supports before entering an interactive setting.

What is Safe Space?

Safe space is about connecting with one's own voice and identity. Adult and peer mentors talk about what safe space means to them, in their own words:

- Looking through one's own eyes, own interpretation. Connecting with one's own voice.
- Connecting with one's own voice and speaking one's truth, being part of resonant relationships in which people feel about to speak freely and hear their own voice clearly.
- Spaces where one can gauge and touch internally our emotions and think about what is happening and why you are feeling discomfort, challenge messages you learned about intimate relationships and how this impacts your connections...you can really get inside another person's being and experiences
- Avenues and spaces to express oneself freely, not guarded or ruled, there are not really that many places to express oneself in that way.
- Having a safe community to feel included, a sense of belonging, to explore their identity, meet peers and do fun things
- Spaces where young people can see their world and feel seen
- Naming selves, seeing yourself through your own eyes and speaking from that perspective
- "Seeing" through one's own perspective – self-definition. Girls can be seen and start to see themselves in relation to their worlds.

- In order to be really real, can be painful but also very liberating...when you feel safe this is really powerful, you can express yourself in a real way where you are not condemned or judged for what you are putting out. Mentor, Interviews, 2009

During one conversation with a small group of mentors interviewed for this resource, a question was asked about what an accessible role model means to them. Right away everyone said the name of a colleague they all know in different capacities. “She is a youth magnet. I don’t know what it is about her”. Someone said - you get the feeling she really cares about you. Whatever you have to say, she wants to hear about it. Youth don’t often feel that”. After a moment, one person said: “her behaviour matches her actions and beliefs”.

A strong accessible mentor creates safe spaces and models healthy equal relationships by practicing congruence. **Congruence is the ability to see and say things as they are** (Mandell, 2007).

The Ins and Outs of Safe Inclusive Spaces

A strong facilitator will practice congruence and model inclusion by challenging stereotypes and intervening when remarks or behaviours occur. In one mentor’s words, a strong mentor is: “someone courageous enough to acknowledge if anything discriminatory is happening, like a comment is made, they can address it in a sincere way and won’t let it slide, that is more powerful than a bunch of lessons on anti-oppression”.

Our stories make us vulnerable to being fixed exploited dismissed or ignored we have learned to tell them guardedly or not at all...we lose something of great value for the more we know about another’s story the harder it is to hate them or harm that person.

Parker Palmer, 2004.

Establishing safe inclusive spaces with youth, means recognizing that we all bring our own lived experiences, social contexts, histories and backgrounds to the spaces we occupy. These lived experiences are informed by power imbalances that exist in society – imbalances which are so often invisible and can be taken for granted because they are seamlessly woven into social and institutional structures, and unconsciously or consciously transmitted through our relationships with one another (Berman et al, 2002). For example, people may bring their own vulnerabilities, biases and stereotypes into the space, causing some to take up more space than others and some to recede into the background. Some may say things without thinking, others have unchecked stereotypes they bring into the space with them. It is important to make sure everyone feels welcome, seen and heard. One mentor observes, “it is not just about the words, it is about what they are trying to say - people often don’t give others enough room to speak”.

As seen in the last section, youth may internalize messages they are receiving from popular culture and say to themselves: “maybe I shouldn’t say anything about that comment, it’s not like anyone cares” or “maybe I am that girl they say I am” or “maybe I do dress geeky and talk loud”. These kinds of internalized messages are not only



an affront to the self, making one feel “less than”, it is an affront to one’s spirit because by taking on these messages one begins to silence and become invisible even to oneself.

I can’t say who I am unless you agree I’m real

Imamu Amiri Baraka

A mentor reinforces safe space, conveys empathy and respect and sets and maintains boundaries in a variety of ways for the benefit of others. This is done through verbal and non-verbal communication - listening, non-verbal cues – including tonality and body language, openness, genuineness, warmth (Mendell, 2007). This can also be done by sharing critical insights and self-awareness about one’s values, beliefs, attitudes and biases. In clinical settings this is referred to as “use of self” (Mendell, 2007).

Creating safe inclusive spaces: Anti-oppression practice

Anti-oppressive practice requires not only cultural sensitivity but an accompanying commitment to recognizing and addressing power imbalances arising from cultural differences (Mandell, 2007).

Tips from mentors:

- Mentors should reflect the diversity of the youth we see...the people at the front of the room, should represent the diversity of experience of those in the room
- Need to set ground rules to create a good atmosphere and allow everyone to feel comfortable
- As much as possible these rules should come from the group (i.e. safe means no name calling, and finding respectful means of expressing opposition)
- So important, not just about guidelines respect and confidentiality, about space where youth can be in and feel they are welcome and ok. This has to come from facilitators and peers.
- If there is conflict between the group members this is an opportunity to create a different space.

Mentor, Interviews, 2009

For excellent resources on creating safe inclusive spaces:

METRAC developed **Don’t Make Me Repeat Myself!** A Peer Educator’s Advocacy Training Manual for Youth on Gender-Based Violence which uses an anti-oppression framework. **METRAC** is a community based not-for-profit organization which works to prevent violence against women, youth, and children.
<http://www.metrac.org/programs/info/yap.advocacy.training.manual.pdf>

Girls Action Foundation developed **Amplify: Designing Spaces and Programs for Girls: A Toolkit and Sharing practices and strategies towards violence prevention and social justice for girls, Girl-Specific Programs.**
<http://www.girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/2008-edition-1>

Fire It Up! is an anti-oppression toolkit developed by the Youth Action Network. The Youth Action Network (YAN) is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering youth to take action on social justice and environmental issues.
www.youthactionnetwork.org/rac/Fireitup/FireItUp.pdf

In groups where boundaries of safety and respect have been established, peers will help one another voice their experiences. For example, one mentor gave an example where an 8 year old girl was really shy and did not want to give an answer out loud, so she whispered her answer to another girl and that girl encouraged her to say it and she did. The mentor found this really touching and said: “It was really great to have girls empowering one another to speak up.”

A strong facilitator makes sure everyone has the chance to contribute by noticing: who is not in front of the room who is not speaking up and what is not being talked about. In one mentor’s words: “These are the stories need space to breathe”. Mentors gave examples of moments in their work when stories were given the space to breathe, in the words of one mentor: “one girl was so quiet and shy and did not really say much, then when we were having a discussion about experiences of racism she gave a very powerful monologue about what it felt like to be stopped at an airport. It was a really powerful moment”.

The Arts as Safe Venues for Engagement

The organizations featured in this resource used a variety of innovative creative strategies for engaging youth in collaborative relationships within their organizations.

The following section highlights some of the arts-based approaches which were used to create venues for critical thinking and engagement. For a comprehensive list of

The arts are how we explain ourselves and how we come to know ourselves. They are woven into the very fabric of our complicated democracy and into the lives of our people. They are in a very real way the sum of our collective soul.

JoAnn Falletta 2009

tools and resources created by these and other organizations for use with youth in workshop and group settings, refer to the Resources and Tools section at the end of this resource.

The arts provide safe contexts in which challenging issues can be explored and grappled with in non-threatening ways. Many of the organizations featured in this resource used **theatre, photography, photo-novella, writing, storytelling, role playing, film, new media, video, DJ workshops, spoken word poetry, filmmaking, dance, and hip hop** to explore challenging issues in non threatening ways. These art forms create safe venues for exploring one’s identity and experiences and provide spaces to engage around sensitive issues – sexual health, body image, assertiveness, dating violence, romantic relationships, identity and sexuality.

Theatre and digital storytelling

- **Days of Courage** is a mentoring program for organizations who work with youth. The aim of this program is to reduce the incidents of bullying and violence of youth within these organizations and communities. Days of Courage is run by youth for youth. www.daysofcourage.com
- **The Changing Lives Youth Theatre Company** provides peer education through interactive theater. Changing Lives is a collaboration between SafePlace, Theatre Action Project and the City of Austin Youth Employment Program. <http://www.theatreactionproject.org>
- **The Center for Digital Storytelling** is an international not-for-profit community arts organization rooted in the craft of personal storytelling. They assist youth and adults around the world in using media tools to share, record, and value stories from their lives, in ways that promote artistic expression, health and well being, and justice. <http://www.storycenter.org>

Digital culture also provides incredible opportunities for self-expression. All arts forms, including new media and interactive media create forums for storytelling – spaces and places for sharing one’s story and being heard. In one mentor’s words, “art in all forms bridges divides, expresses something very personal to you, it is an incredible tool to reflect and bring people together”. Different art forms and tools give youth platforms to express their unique selves, and mentors indicate that often arts oriented programming provide “first performances” for some youth on their road to becoming musicians, actors and artists.

The arts are for everyone. In one mentor’s words: “you don’t have to be a gifted artist to bring people together and explore different parts of yourself”. Art activities also spark discussion, making issues and concerns more concrete for youth. One mentor points out, arts based activities provide “creative ways to get people out of their heads and bring themselves into a space without getting stuck in it”. It allows people space to engage with stories at the level at which they are comfortable. In one mentor’s words: “it gives room for participants to take what they want from it”. The arts and arts based activities are spacious, each member of the group can engage at the level they are most comfortable with.

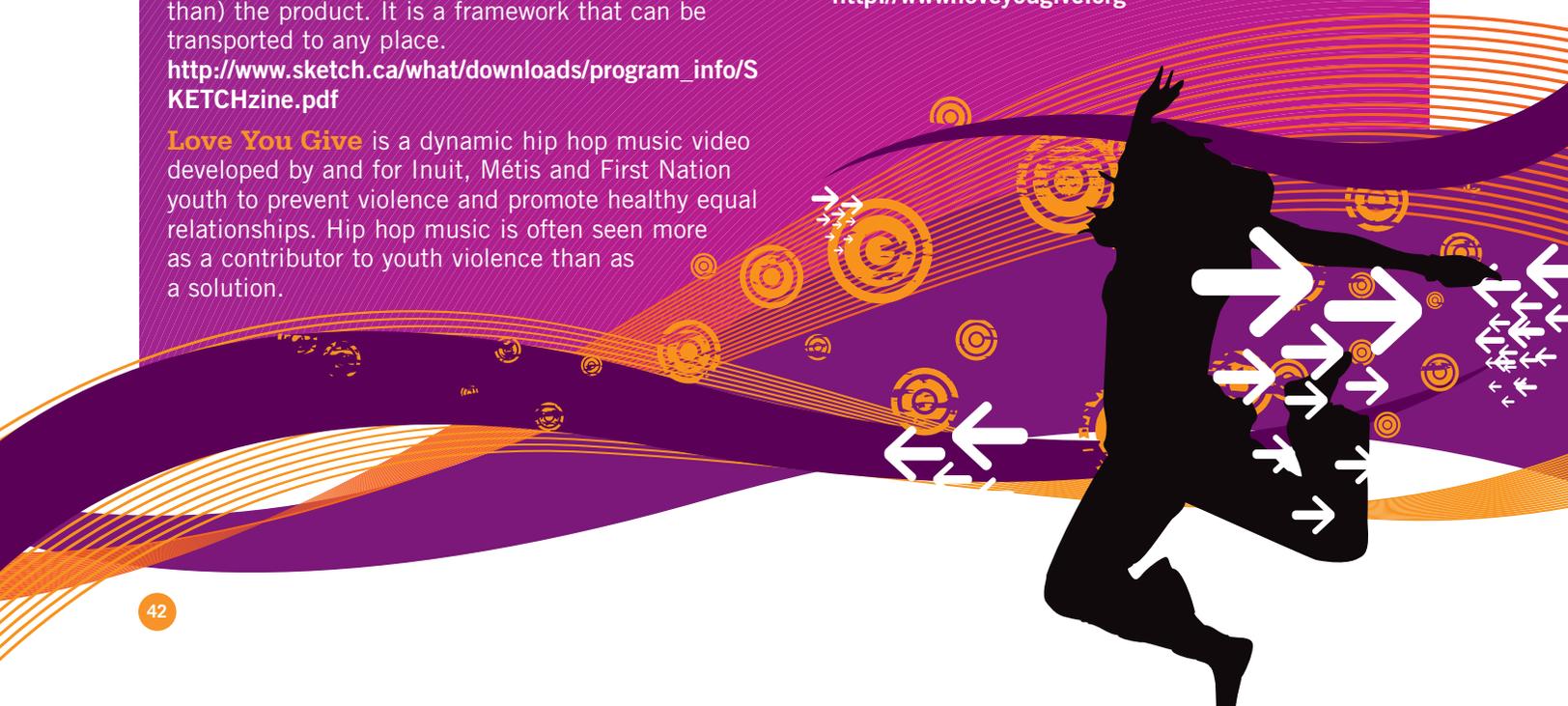
SKETCH an arts based program, open studio for street involved youth

Sketch programs provide access to youth who are at different places in their lives. It offers a progressive learning framework that can lead to long-term sustainable change. Or you can just stop in for a day. Youth choose their entry, their tools and determine the process. True to Community Arts practice, the process is as important as (sometimes more important than) the product. It is a framework that can be transported to any place.

http://www.sketch.ca/what/downloads/program_info/SKETCHzine.pdf

Love You Give is a dynamic hip hop music video developed by and for Inuit, Métis and First Nation youth to prevent violence and promote healthy equal relationships. Hip hop music is often seen more as a contributor to youth violence than as a solution.

■ **Love You Give** brings together the talents of award-winning hip hop artists Lakota Jonez and Big Dro with the Minwaashin Lodge dance troupe. Informed by the voices of a hundred 7- to 19 year-olds, choreographed by Culture Shock Canada, filmed at the Museum of Civilization, and produced by Canterbury High School students under the supervision of teacher Steve Willcock and local production company, Reel Concepts.
<http://www.loveyougive.org>



Fostering Engagement and Critical Thinking

Art-based activities create safe spaces for **“teachable moments”** (Elsden-Clifton, 2008, 40) **and venues for critical thinking.** The mentors we interviewed emphasized that arts based activities provide different ways of seeing, enabling participants to “see” things that may otherwise be invisible. For example, many girls do not see the forces that shape their lives, what violence is, and gendered understandings, through role playing and different activities; girls can see how violence plays out, in one mentor’s words: “how words and behaviours are used to build people up and tear them down.”

Images can be more powerful than words you take a tissue paper flower spray it with water and show girls this is what happens when one uses abusive words...it is very visual

Mentor, Interview, 2009

Mentors identify that it is really hard to be explicit about violence using words alone, it is much easier to show through role playing than to talk about it explicitly. For example, one mentor points out: “sexual harassment and family violence are hard to verbalize with a workshop you can have a story about the issue and look at what you would do in that situation”. The arts provide non-threatening way to talk about societies expectations of us and to see ourselves outside of that. One example of this is the “real man in a box exercise”. **Arts-based activities provide a way to “see” others and it humanizes experiences. For example, role playing allows one to get into middle of people’s stories, and witness or imagine what it must be like to be that person.** It builds empathy and puts a face on the issue. One of the schools does an

exercise on sexual diversity - introducing a person’s story to the audience and allowing them to get to know that person before they “come out” – encouraging the audience to think differently about any stereotypes or preconceived ideas about gay people they may have had.

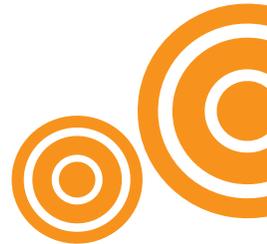
Spaces for Grappling and Learning

Arts based activities provide safe non-threatening venues to act out real life scenarios, including highly charged issues, and spaces for grapple with any contradictions that may arise. It provides safe venues for “structuring experiences that can help students work through crises productively” (Elsden-Clifton, 2008, 40).

“Everything you want to change about yourself, all the parts of yourself that you keep secret. Its your power, its who you are”

Alvin (Charles S. Dutton), Fame, 2009

Forum Theatre is a type of theatre created by Augusto Boal as part of what he calls “Theatre of the Oppressed”. Forum theatre has been adapted and utilized in a variety of different settings to help raise awareness and engage groups on challenging issues. It is being used by the Fourth R as part of its violence prevention curriculum and strategy. This approach has provided opportunities to practice the necessary skills to intervene in situations that involve violence against girls (Jaffe & Hughes, 2008).



Forum Theatre

The Fourth R and Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children have had tremendous success with a play called **Missed Opportunities** that deals with the impact of domestic violence on a mother and daughter as well as the potential role of friends, family and co-workers to intervene.

They have developed a new forum theatre piece called **True Colours** which is an original piece which

will be performed for the first time at the **Rethinking Relationships Conference** hosted by the Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children (CREVAWC) November 20, 2009.

The Fourth R: Relationship Based Violence Prevention <http://youthrelationships.org>

Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children <http://www.crvawc.ca>

Being Present through the Arts

- Connecting with different parts of oneself including mind and body through creative activities including music, dance and theatre.
- Having been abused I realized I needed to heal, I was very attracted to creativity, especially theatre and dance, it gives me a voice and connects me with my body.
- Girls need to learn how to assert themselves vocally and physically through self-defense.

■ Girls in our organization want more physical activities, they are in school all day and want to really be active and have fun, and this is reflected in our programming. We have a scenario “what’s cool vs. what’s hot” using a thermometer. We give a scenario and say “I went to my friends’ house today and she was really rude, the girl runs up and posts on the thermometer where she would put that experience on the temperature gage. It is important to reflect in an active way.

■ Activities to get the body and the mind moving are important for students to feel fully engaged Mentor Interviews, 2009

Theatre and role playing provide opportunities for taking up and physically inhabiting space. This can be particularly empowering for girls and young women and those who struggle with assertiveness, have body image challenges or have experienced abused. The physicality provided by different art venues allow one to re-claim space and assert oneself in the world.

Arts based venues provide powerful vehicles for experiential knowledge and allow one to encounter more than one version of experience...creating a rupture in one’s taken for granted assumptions (Bateson, 2000).

In one mentor’s words: “it can provide the capacity to take in another person’s experience and have a language for it, this causes you to look critically at your own experiences, and see things differently...there is no single transformation...it is a series of exposures to insights and experiences...which are layered and reveal different layers of reality”. The arts provide opportunities to slow things down and to enter and witness another person’s experiences and stories, in ways that may alter their own sense of “how things are”, possibly even challenging assumptions that may otherwise have been taken for granted.

Conclusion

The kinds of issues youth grapple with are complicated. Youth today face a variety of internal and external struggles that can create a great deal of complexity and confusion, about relationships, healthy sexuality and gender roles. Youth need safe spaces and places to unpack these issues and the really grapple and engage with their stories and experiences. The mentors emphasize they don't have all the answers. In one mentor's words, there is **“no one right way...we are doing the best we can...we are all in it together to learn from one another”**. Their work simply demonstrated a willingness to be truly engaged with youth, and to seek out innovative and creative ways of doing this.

Mentors emphasize that promoting healthy equal relationships with youth requires one to really engage, with youth themselves, AND with the range of issues, emotions, concerns, insights and understandings that youth put forward. Mentors must be willing to learn, in one mentor's words: **“don't be afraid to really look at yourself and your own understandings... be willing to be uncomfortable and listen”**.

Being engaged and present with different realities, different experiences, can feel disorienting. Rather than rushing in to solve the challenge, or glossing over it because it causes discomfort, Mendell highlights: “tensions need to be allowed rather than quelled...in order to create new social possibilities” (Mendell, 2007, p. 13). This means releasing the need to be in control, and allowing for more spacious encounters and engagements with youth.



Improvisational Lessons

“Young people want mentors to tell them about hard things they have experienced or have worked through...a skilled one can reveal themselves while still being a mentor”.

Mentor, Interview, 2009

Professionals in various fields – education, health, social services - are trained to maintain their professional image by practicing “objectivity” and withholding the “self”, a stance which makes them less vulnerable perhaps, but also makes them seem a little less human. This can leave youth feeling alone and isolated – like they are the only ones who make mistakes and struggle with things.

In order to establish safe spaces for and with youth, the adults in their lives need to be approachable. Youth want and need to know something about the adults and people in their lives, including who they are and how they came to be where they are. In one mentor’s words: “Young people want mentors to tell them about hard things they have experienced or have worked through...a skilled one can reveal themselves while still being a mentor”.

This resource closes with words from mentors themselves, about what healthy equal relationships mean to them, about the role models in their lives, and what they have learned that they would like to pass along.

Mentors talk about what it means to be “knowable”:

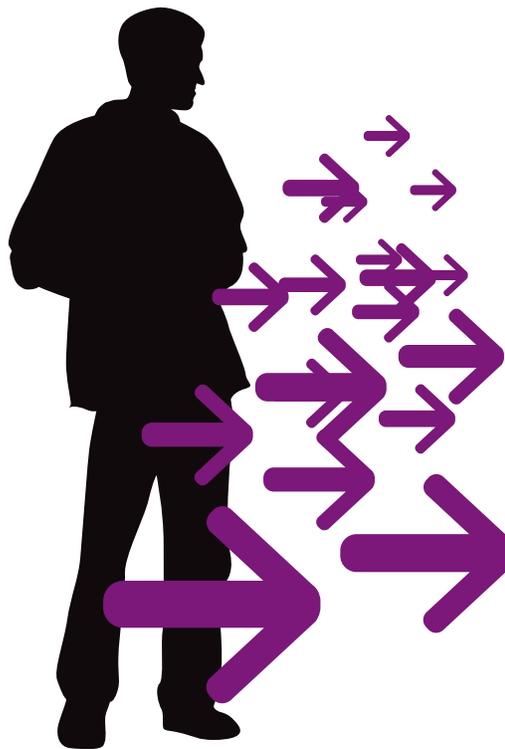
- Opening yourself up and showing them that you are comfortable to being open with them
- Give little of own experience
- Speak from a first person perspective - speak for yourself, not hiding behind anything
- Self-disclosure can be valuable, about one’s own experiences
- Take time and open up, girls want access to you – you are comfortable sharing with them, and they don’t feel a wall they will want to share and talk with you.

Mentors, Interviews, 2009

Leading by Example: Mentors talk about what relationships mean to them

- Look for mentors who are content in their own life and comfortable in who they are. Not invested in how a person blooms, are there to listen and guide, accept where they are at and help them become more who they are...
- Mentors are people who really see all the best in you and really know how to help you see that...reframe and look at things differently
- Someone willing to take risks and be vulnerable...what I admire are women who don’t just put on a brave face – but are scared and do it anyway...this is how I want to try to do things
- To me it is someone who shows outward confidence in whatever they are doing, this has affected me most, I see what them do what they do, they do it so well and make it seem a natural part of them, I strive to achieve that
- Someone who has influenced how you see yourself in the world, by expanding your sense of possibility, and reinforcing part of your identity you share together. Someone you saw making choices you would want for yourself, something really valued by you, watching them follow-through with it even if it requires commitment and struggle
- I had mentors who saw all kinds of potential in me and had so much confidence in me, I felt I could do anything and was given the time to build my potential and capacity. A lot of youth don’t have that in their lives and have so little in terms of support. Young people need to feel seen and believed and that important people in their lives believe in them.
- My role models were in church, my role models would talk to me differently in a different tone, I felt like my voice was heard.
- My mentors taught me a lot about interpersonal relationships and dynamics, how to communicate and be sincere and genuine

- What I would like to pass on that they are comfortable with themselves, make decisions as they grow and enter relationships that are healthy and mutually positive and to be content. Some girls feel they need a boyfriend. I want to show that they can be happy with themselves. It is ok not to have a boyfriend to be who they can be to say no to things, to build a house if they want - somewhere they went and it felt good.
- My first supervisor taught me a lot, helped me to see and value alternate stories, make room for voices on the margins and develop a gentle respectful way of working. Own values based on how they want to live
- Growing up in a Caucasian school setting, motivated me to not be drowned out, I wanted my voice to be heard. Now I see myself as a mentor to young girls of colour, I get where they are coming from and can share experiences with them to show options and help them feel supported. Helping to steer girls in the right direction, down a successful path I want to show girls of colour, "you are not who they say you are in the videos".
- I have a mentor who has had a huge impact in my life. He's a poet and performer and gave up gigs so that I could get experience performing. I have been given a lot of opportunities with events and conferences and feel blessed in my life. I want to share these opportunities with others who are less privileged.
- If you see someone you care about being exposed to violence and want to make a difference, you can make a difference...very true for men...stepping outside the box - need to normalize the idea of conversations between men and boys
- I didn't really have a role model, for me it was about what not to do. I wanted to flip it and be different, I knew what not to be, and that was my example.
- I have learned to do the opposite of some of the mistakes I see around me. There is a flip site to everything and you can learn from all of your experiences



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Recommended Tools and Resources

This section provides adults working with diverse communities of youth in different sectors across the province with knowledge and skills in the form of tools and resources.

Relationship Abuse Prevention (R.A.P.) Program is a violence prevention program that educates middle and high school youth as well as parents, educators, adolescent health care providers and youth service workers about the dynamics of domestic and dating violence. It explores the interrelated nature of violence in the home, in schools, in society and in the media. Youth are taught how to recognize the warning signs of an abusive relationship, how racism and sexism are linked to violent behavior, and how to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. Parents and educators learn how to become allies to youth as they increase their understanding on this issue. Health care providers learn ways to address this problem with their adolescent clients and how to provide support and assistance. http://www.fvlc.org/pdf_rap/RAP_Curriculum.pdf

Skills Mastery and Resistance Training SMART Girls (Boys and Girls Club) is a program of health and life skills for girls ages 8 to 17. The goal of SMART Girls is to help girls develop healthy attitudes and lifestyles. The program is also intended to help girls make positive decisions at this critical stage in their development. For more information on this or other Club programs, please contact us at 317-584-5333. http://www.bgcofmc.org/main_sublinks.asp?id=6&sid=47

Passport to Manhood (Boys and Girls Club) promotes and teaches responsibility while reinforcing positive behavior in male Club members ages 11 to 14. Passport to Manhood consists of 14 small-group sessions, each of which concentrates on a specific aspect of manhood through highly interactive activities. Each participant is issued his own "Passport" to underscore the idea that he is on a journey of maturation and personal growth. http://www.bgcofmc.org/main_sublinks.asp?id=6&sid=48

In Touch with Teens Curriculum
http://peaceoverviolence.org/education/itwt_curriculum/summary

Expect Respect Manual is a comprehensive prevention program designed to raise awareness of dating violence, teach skills for healthy relationship, develop youth leadership, and increase safety and respect on school campuses. Expect Respect can be implemented by advocates, counselors, and educators in middle and high schools, and youth serving organizations. http://www.safeplace.org/site/DocServer/Ball-Expect_Bk_1-Overview.pdf?docID=3201

Choose Respect consists of a variety of educational materials that are designed to encourage youth ages 11-14 to form healthy, respect relationships and to prevent dating abuse before it starts. SafePlace provides training and technical assistance for schools who want to implement Choose Respect on their campus including faculty/staff orientation, facilitator training for teachers and counselors who will conduct classroom activities, parent seminars, and assistance with campus-specific awareness activities. Community Action Kit: http://www.chooserespect.org/scripts/materials/actionkit/choose_respect_action_kit.pdf

Teacher's Manual that is designed to accompany a video called "Causing Pain: Real Stories of Dating Abuse and Violence." <http://www.chooserespect.org/scripts/materials/discussionguide/discussionguide.pdf>

Stop the Violence, Break the Silence Training Guide & Resource Kit provides replicable models and tools, developed by SafePlace Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program), to build prevention, education and intervention programs for people with disabilities within a domestic violence, sexual assault or disability service agency. Materials are appropriate for presentations to persons with disabilities, family members, professionals working in crisis intervention and disability services. The model promotes equal access to programs and services for abuse survivors and strengthens the capacity of advocates and victims to promote social change. Stop the Violence, Break the Silence Training Guide is available in alternative formats including: audiocassette, floppy disk and CD-ROM. http://www.safeplace.org/site/PageServer?pagename=program_disability_stopintro
http://www.safeplace.org/site/PageServer?pagename=program_disability_stopmodules

Ugly Ducklings Community Action Kit: A cutting edge multi-media resource designed to educate and inspire people to take action against bias-based bullying and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The Community Action Kit includes an educational documentary film; enhanced interview footage with youth, parents, and educators; tips, discussion questions, activities, and resources for creating safe, equitable, inclusive environments for LGBTQ youth. Learn more about Ugly Ducklings at the Campaign's website

**Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir!
 An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure!**

A resource manual *Le pouvoir aux enfants* produced by Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) consists of activities, resources and tools for educators working with children and adolescents (ages 8-16). The manual focuses on a variety of themes related to the prevention of violence, including healthy relationships, good communication, self-esteem, boundaries, conflict resolution and self-affirmation. Available at: www.infocopa.com/ressources/

Girl Power facilitator and participant manuals produced by Nishnawbe Aski Nation for the Girl Power program to support Aboriginal girls (ages 10-14) to develop self-esteem, awareness and skills for healthy, equal relationships and to build girl-friendly communities. The program manuals are available at: www.nandecade.ca/article/girl-power-resources-97.asp

Roots of Equality: Workshop Outlines for Grade 7 & 8 Girls
 This workshop curriculum for Grade 7 & 8 girls includes 4 complete workshop outlines, overhead templates, activities and handouts. <http://www.springtideresources.org/resources/show.cfm?id=196>

Love You Give: This is a dynamic rap/hip hop music video developed by and for Inuit, Métis and First Nations youth to prevent violence and promote healthy equal relationships. The video features award-winning hip hop artists Lakota Jonez and Big Dro with 25 Aboriginal youth from the Minwaashin Lodge dance troupe. The song highlights key elements of healthy relationships built on the Seven Sacred Teachings. The video and tool kit of youth-focused educational resources was developed by Minwaashin Lodge: Aboriginal Women's Support Centre. View the video at www.loveyougive.org (English only) or for more information call 613-741-5590.

RePlay Video Games: Finding Zoe/ReJouer: ReJouer: Où est Zoé?: Children and youth (ages 8-14) will learn about challenging behaviours and attitudes as part of this free, award-winning online game about healthy, equal relationships. Resource booklets for youth, educators and parents accompany the game. Developed by the Metropolitan

Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) in consultation with community partners and over 250 Ontario youth and educators. Play the game at www.metrac.org (English or French), or for more information, contact info@metrac.org or call 416-392-3135.

Tools for Change Educator's Website: This website provides a comprehensive listing of resources that promote healthy, equal relationships, reviewed and critiqued using a strengths-based model and matched to grades 3 to 9 and the Ontario curriculum. A pedagogical review will help educators choose resources for their own teaching style. Developed by the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, with guidance from the University of Western Ontario Faculty of Education and local public and Catholic school boards. Available at www.toolsforchange.ca (English only) or for more information call 519-661-2111.

Roots of Equality, Equal Relationships Teachers' Kit: Teacher workshops, interactive resource materials, and opportunities for children and youth to produce their own resources are just some of the components of this comprehensive kit to promote respectful, healthy, equal relationships in grades 3 to 5. The kit also has resources to be used at conferences for girls, tip sheets in multiple languages and curriculum materials. A newsletter on prevention will highlight current initiatives and resources. Developed by Springtide Resources Inc. in partnership with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. Available at www.springtideresources.org (English only) or for more information call 416-968-3422.

White Ribbon Campaign in a Box: The Campaign in a Box includes fully interactive exercises designed to help teach and promote healthy, equal relationships among boys and girls. This meets Ontario curriculum expectations and is specifically formulated for use in grades 5 to 8. Guidance provided by faculties of education and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. Order Campaign in a Box at www.whiteribbon.com or call 1-800-328-2228.

Le Centre ontarien de prevention des agressions (COPA) and White Ribbon Campaign partnered create a bilingual website campaign "It Starts With You It Stays With Him. The campaign is designed to encourage adult men to act as role models to boys age 8-14, by promoting gender equality and healthy equal relationships. <http://www.itstartswithyou.ca/home/>

The Fourth R is an evaluated, comprehensive, schools-based program that stresses the importance of healthy relationships. Fourth R initiatives use best practice approaches to target multiple forms of violence, including bullying, dating violence, peer violence, and group violence. By building healthy school environments we provide opportunities to engage students in developing healthy relationships and decision-making to provide a solid foundation for their learning experience. Increasing youth relationship skills and targeting risk behaviour with a harm reduction approach empowers adolescents to make healthier decisions about relationships, substance use and sexual behaviour. The program consists of integrated lesson plans for English and Physical and Health Education and meets the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum expectations. Programming has also been specifically designed and adapted for alternative education and after-school group settings, aboriginal communities, and Catholic schools. For more information, please contact us at 519-858-5154, or visit the website at www.youthrelationships.org.

This is the contact information for the projects shared in the Mentoring Models and Frameworks and Relationship Strategies sections. You are invited to contact any of the organizations listed to find out more about their projects.

Minwaashin Lodge Aboriginal Women's Support Centre

424 Catherine Street, 2nd Floor
Ottawa, ON K1R 5T8
Tel: 613-741-5590 Fax: 613-748-8311

White Ribbon Campaign

365 Bloor St. East
Toronto, ON M4W 3L4
Tel: 416-920-6684
Toll Free: 1-800-328-2228
Fax: 416-920-1678

Le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA)

457A, Danforth Avenue
Toronto, ON M4K 1P1
Tel: 416-466-7490
Toll Free: 1-888-400-8975
Fax: 416-466-4932

Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO)

140 Genest Street, Suite 230
Ottawa, ON K1L 7Y9
Tel: 613-260-8055
Toll Free: 1-877-260-8055
Fax: 613-260-5346

Afghan Women's Organization

789 Don Mills Road, Suite 312
Toronto ON M3C 1T5
Tel: 416-588-3585 Fax: 416-588-4552

Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre

1326 Gerrard St. E
Toronto, ON M4L 1Z1
Tel: 416-465- 6021 Fax: 416-465-4785

K-W Counselling Services

480 Charles St. East
Kitchener, ON N2G 4K5
Tel: 519-884-0000 Fax: 519-884-7000

Springtide Resources

215 Spadina Avenue, Suite 220
Toronto, ON M5T 2C7
Tel: 416-968-3422 TTY: 416-968-7335
Fax: 416-968-2026

Girl Guides of Canada

50 Merton Street
Toronto, ON M4S 1A3
Tel: 416-487-5281

METRAC

158 Spadina Road
Toronto, ON M5R 2T8
Tel: 416-392-3135 TTY: 416-392-3031
Toll Free: 1-877-558-5570

YWCA Toronto

80 Woodlawn Avenue East
Toronto, ON M4T 1C1
Tel: 416-961-8100
Fax: 416-961-7739

The Fourth R

CAMH Centre for Prevention Science
100-100 Collip Circle
London, ON N6G 4X8
Tel: 519-858-5144 Fax: 519-858-5149

Sexual Assault Centre London

379 Dundas Street, Suite 121
London, ON N6B 1V5
Tel: 519-439-0844 TTY: 519-439-0690
Fax: 519-439-9931

Supporting our Youth (SOY) Sherbourne Community Health Centre

333 Sherbourne Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M5A 2S5
Tel: 416-324-5077 Fax: 416-324-4188

Girls Action Foundation (National Network)

24 Mont Royal West, Suite 601
Montreal, QC H2T 2S2
Tel: 514-948-1112
Toll Free: 1-888-948-1112
Fax: 514-948-5926



Centre for Research & Education
on Violence against Women and Children

Faculty of Education Building, University of Western Ontario
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www.CRVAWC.ca

