Intro to Youth Voice for Adults

Workshop 2

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This workshop for up to 40 adult-only participants includes a self-reflection activity, learning fundamentals of Youth Voice, critical thinking, and basic program planning.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

1. Identify relevance of Youth Voice in their personal life
2. Identify barriers to Youth Voice

Time: 2 hours

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Enough room for the group to split up into small groups. It is necessary to move chairs in order to conduct the icebreaker.

Considerations: During visualizations, make sure you keep your own opinions and/or editorial comments to yourself. Participants should have the opportunity to construct their own visions without your personal input. You’ll want to throw in a break at some point during the workshop. The case study activity near the end is optional.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Introduce yourself, go over the agenda, and review the goals.

2. [10 min] Choose an icebreaker, making sure that the game ends with everyone in small groups of 5-8.

3. [5 min] Begin the reflection by reading the following at a comfortable, relaxed pace. Your tone should be quiet and calming. Give people time to bring up the images in their heads and really remember them. You can add to or subtract from this script as needed.

Begin by asking each group to sit down and get comfortable. Explain that you will lead them through a reflection activity that sends them back in time to when they were teenagers. Ask them to close their eyes. Then ask them to imagine that it’s [use today’s date] during their X grade year in school—If the group consists of people who work primarily with one age group (e.g., fourth graders) use that school year. Otherwise chose a year in school for them. A year in middle or high school works best. Start by saying...

“Think about getting up in the morning. What time is it? Does someone wake you up? Who? Do you get up easily or is it a pain? What is your morning routine? Do you take a shower, bath, or do your hair? What are you wearing?
Are you ready in a few minutes? An hour? Who else is around in the morning? Do you have to help anyone else get ready?

“Now you leave for school. How do you get there? Bus, drive, get a ride, walk, bike? Do you go with others? What does the building look like? How do you feel about the place? What do you do when you first get inside? Do you go to your locker? Hang out with friends? Who are your friends? How do you feel about them?

“What is your first class of the day? Who teaches it? Do you like the subject? Do you like the teacher? What are your favorite classes? What classes do you dislike? Why? What about lunch? Where do you eat? What did you eat? Do you have any meetings?

“Now it is the end of the school day. Do you play a sport, have an activity, have a job, do your homework, hang out with friends? What adults do you encounter: coaches, advisors, administrators, or bosses? When do you get home? Do you eat dinner with your family? Do you do homework, or pretend to do homework? Do you watch TV? Talk on the phone? What time do you go to bed? How do you feel at the end of the day?”

4. [15 min] After a pause, ask participants to return to the present and open their eyes. Tell them you understand that the exercise may have reminded them of some painful or personal memories, and perhaps of some humorous ones, too. Reassure them that no one will be forced to share, but that you’re going to ask each small group to take a moment to share general reactions. It might be useful to journal alone for a moment on the following questions:

- What was good about being young?
- What was not good about being young?

5. [10 min] Ask each group to report back to the large group, and share some of their reflections.

6. [15 min] Tell the group that through a variety of small and large group conversations you are going to examine their current involvement throughout their community. You can ask each individual to think about the neighborhood groups, clubs, committees, boards, religious groups, friends, family, and volunteer work they do. Then ask them to imagine being a young person doing that work.

You might next ask participants to remember back to the visualization and what it was like to be a teenager. Ask “How would it affect your current community involvement if you had no desk, no way to take phone calls for most of the day, probably limited access to a computer and transportation. How do you remember interacting with adults? How did they treat you?

7. [15 min] In the following conversation participants discuss barriers to Youth Voice. Barriers are limitations, obstacles, or challenges that youth and adults face. Have each group brainstorm answers to the following questions and record their answers on flip chart paper.
• What do adults do that gets in the way or makes it difficult for Youth Voice?
• What do young people do that gets in the way and makes it difficult for Youth Voice?
• What other barriers to Youth Voice exist?

8. [10 min] Have each small group report back to the whole group, and pick the top barriers.

9. [15 min] Assign each group one of the top barriers. Ask them to develop strategies for preventing and/or overcoming the barrier, and report back to whole group.

10. [10 min] Have each participant take a moment to write two things they can do personally in the next two weeks to engage Youth Voice. Then have them write two things they can do in their programs or organizations in the next two months to put Youth Voice to work. Have people refer back to the lists of strategies generated if they get stuck.

11. [10 min] Evaluate and close.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

• [20 min] If time allows, take an example from the group of a project in progress or up-coming situation in which youth and adults are or will be working together. Have that group member give the background (people involved, what is going on/will happen, current or anticipated barriers, etc.) and have the rest of the group try and come up with solutions for the person’s problem.