

16. working with youth & young adults



This module explores the unique application of peer support principles to working with youth and young adults.

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EXIT the module

1. welcome

welcome to
WHERE WE ARE AT
working with
youth & young
adults



Welcome to ***Where We Are At***, a training course for Provincial Peer Support Workers. We're glad you're here! This course is made up of 16 modules, all designed to support your training in peer support work.

Module **16. working with youth & young adults** explores the unique application of peer support principles to working with youth and young adults.

Any of the modules in this training can stand alone, but you'll notice they are very interconnected. All of the concepts and core values have many layers, and they will look a little different when you see them through the lens of different topics. For example, self-determination will look a little different when we look at it through the lens of learned helplessness, grief and loss, or goal planning, but the main message will always be the same.

You will get to experience all of those layers and intersections when you move through each module of the training. Feel free to navigate back and forth between modules as you move along since learning never has to be linear. There will be references to other modules intersected throughout.

Thank you for joining us on this educational journey!

2. gratitude



Before we begin this new
learning journey, we ask that you reflect
on the following question:

What am I grateful for today?

We know that taking time to reflect can give us the clarity and strength to do what can sometimes be difficult emotional work.

Download the **reflection journal** below and use it to record your thoughts. Please don't rush. Take all the time you need. This journal will be used for several questions throughout the module.



M16_reflection-journal.pdf
78.1 KB

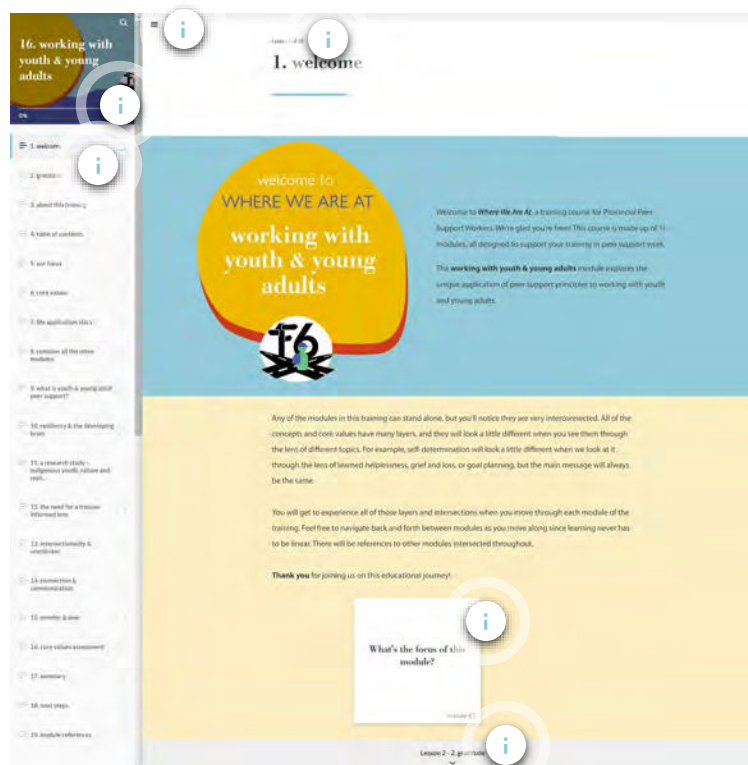


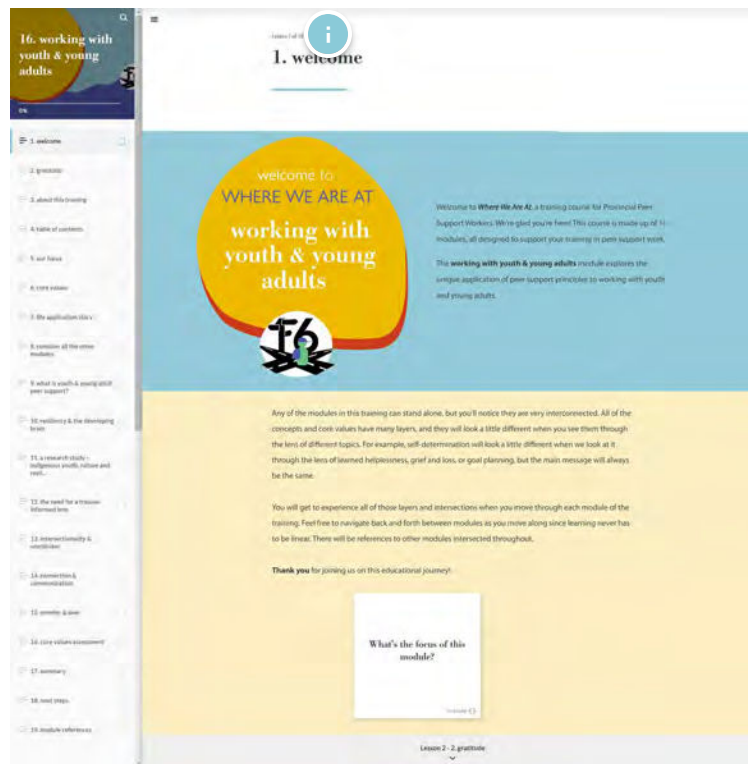
3. about this training

The course content has been guided by consultations that were held with peer support workers. It's with the utmost respect for their experience and wisdom that we share these learnings.

course navigation

You may have questions on how to use this course. We designed an interactive diagram to give you the chance to explore the different functions on the screen. Click the buttons below to learn more.





Lesson titles

Lesson 1 of 19

Above each lesson title, the lesson count is shown.

CONTINUE

reflection journal

As you discovered in the previous section, included in this training is a reflection journal. The journal is designed for you to use throughout the training. It's full of reflective questions related to the topics being explored that will get you engaging in the world around you with curiosity.

Feel free to use the journal in a way that works for you:

- 1 You can print it off and write in it or just use it to support reflective processing
- 2 You can use the fillable PDF version and complete it online
- 3 You can write in your own journal, using the questions as guides

We encourage you to find a safe, comfortable spot to engage with these questions.

CONTINUE

where we are at

provincial peer support worker training curriculum

The *Where We Are At* educational curriculum includes 16 modules. You'll find a brief description of each below.

1. the foundations

An overview of all the practices and knowledge that will be transferable to all of the modules in this training.

2. peer support & wholeness

Provides an introduction to peer support work and explores differences between the peer support role and other roles within the mental health and substance use systems.

3. categories & containers: unpacking our biases

Helps you understand how and why we judge.

4. self-determination

Looks at self-determination, the theory of self-determination and how peer support workers can support creating an ecology where people trust their own inner wisdom.

5. cultural humility

Explores how to approach your peer support work through the lens of cultural humility and helps you understand how culture (and the destruction of culture) shapes our lives.

6. understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them

Examines boundary creation within the context of peer support, grounded in the core value of mutuality.

7. connection & communication

Focuses on cultivating compassion and empathy, listening deeply to understand, and asking powerful questions to increase reflection and connection.

8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care

Brings together all the learnings from previous modules to support the creation of environments and relationships that are safe and trauma-informed.

9. social determinants of health

Explores the social determinants of health and how social, economic and other factors lead to better or worse health outcomes.

10. supporting someone who is grieving

Examines how to understand grief and loss in order to support someone who is grieving, without trying to “fix” or “save” them.

11. substance use & peer support

Explores the principles and methodologies around the harm reduction approach to substance use disorders and some of the history around the criminalization of substance use.

12. mental health & supporting those in crisis —

Explores the mindset shift necessary to support someone through a crisis.

13. goal planning —

Focuses on how peer support relationships can support the creation and meeting of goals.

14. building personal resilience —

Explores ways to build resiliency, create wellness plans and practice self-compassion.

15. family peer support —

Explores family peer support work and how, by working from a place of shared lived experience, family peer support workers can create positive change for families by building long-term relationships based on trust with those supporting loved ones.

16. working with youth & young adults —

Explores the unique application of peer support principles to working with youth and young adults.

4. table of contents

Below you will find a short overview of the topics you'll find in this module.

As you move through these topics, please remember you can always return to this page to revisit the main ideas being explored in each lesson.



life application story —

A scenario about working with young people.

consider all the other modules —

Asks you to reflect on how to apply the topics from other modules to working with young people.

what is youth & young adult peer support?

—

Explains the value of supporting youth and young adults.

resiliency & the developing brain

—

Describes how peer support can support youth and young adults to build resiliency.

a research study – indigenous youth, nature & resiliency

—

Using a study done with Indigenous youth, this lesson looks at the power nature has to support well-being and resilience.

the need for a trauma-informed lens

—

Explains the need to support youth and young adults with a trauma-informed lens, and to see them through their strengths.

intersectionality

—

Looks at how intersectionality applies to youth and young adults.

connection & communication

Suggests ways to build connections with youth and youth adults.

wonder & awe

Explores how youth and young adults benefit from cultivating a sense of wonder.

5. our focus

What's the focus of this module?

1 of 1

This module will dig into the unique application of peer support principles to working with youth and young adults. The concepts of all the other modules are at play in working with youth, but there will be a bit of a paradigm shift in how we apply those concepts.

Specifically, throughout the training, we've talked about creating safe, trauma-informed environments that encourage growth, connection and self-determination. We'll look at applying those principles in a way that's accessible for youth and young adults. The goal, then, is to create connections that support healing-centred growth and engagement.

after reviewing this module, you will be able to...



Express ideas and plans around engaging with youth and young adults in a way that supports possibility and belonging.



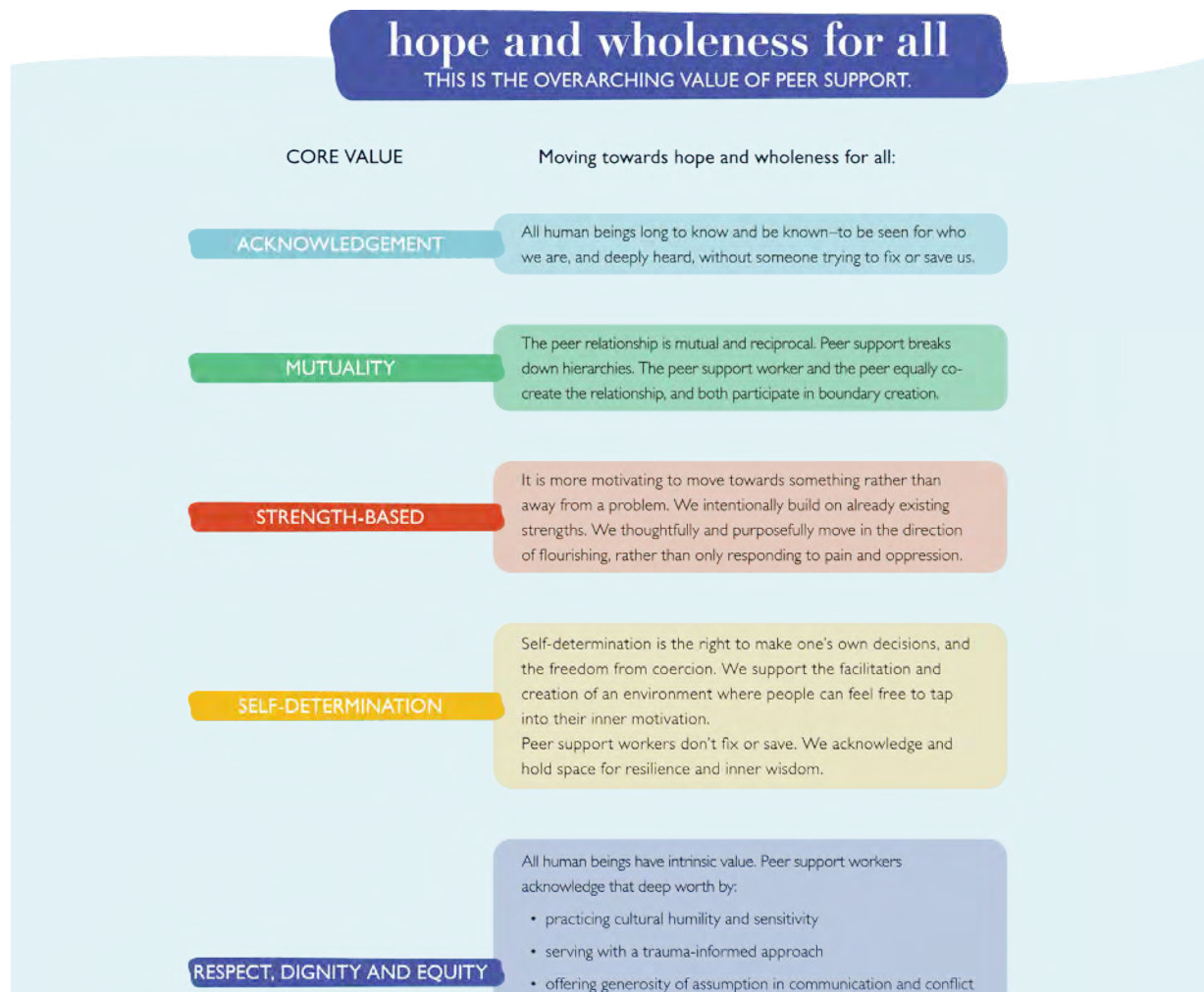
Distinguish the unique needs of youth and young adults when engaging in peer support work.



Create a framework of practice that will engage and resonate with young people and also support their safety and self-empowerment.

6. core values

The following core values are essential for peer support work. At the end of this module, you'll be asked to decide which ones are key to this topic.



- mindfully addressing personal biases

Peer support is about meeting people where they are at and serving others with a knowledge of equity.

BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

Peer Support acknowledges that all human beings need to belong and be a part of a community. Peer support recognizes that many people have barriers that keep them from developing community. We actively work towards deconstructing those social blockades that prevent inclusion and acceptance. Peer support workers serve with a social justice mindset, and intentionally practice empathy, compassion & self-compassion.

CURIOSITY

We are always intentional about how curiosity and inquiry support connection, growth, learning and engagement.

This curiosity isn't fueled by personal gain but by a genuine interest in connection. We encourage curiosity while respecting the boundaries and protecting the privacy of the people we support.

We are continually curious, but not invasive, while challenging assumptions and narratives. We ask powerful questions. We offer generosity of assumption to those who think differently than we do. We know that listening and asking questions are more important than providing answers.

***Note on the meaning of the term "generosity of assumption" from the glossary of terms:** Assumptions happen when we don't know the whole story, and allow our brains to fill in the blanks. Often we make negative assumptions about people or situations. Generosity of assumption means that we extend someone the most generous interpretation of their intent, actions, or words.

7. life application story

Check out this scenario with Rachel and Nathan.

scenario

Rachel and Nathan had been co-facilitating a peer-based support group for youth for several years. After becoming more comfortable in the role, they decided it would be fun to run a monthly activity night – anything from movie nights to hikes. Youth were encouraged to inform the structure of the group and make their own decisions about what activity they would like to do. One of the participants was quite shy and often sat in the corner away from the rest of the group. Eventually, he expressed an interest in doing an art night. The co-facilitators hosted several of these art nights, and they were always well attended. They noticed that some of the youth who rarely spoke became more engaged during the activities, especially when they weren't pressured or expected to share. Rachel and Nathan learned that distraction and focus of the activity created a space where people felt more comfortable to open up about what was going on in their lives. They also noticed that sharing the creations at the end of the session generated a sense of pride and bonding.

On several occasions, participants advocated for a sunset hike or beach walk. As a group, they strolled down the beach, listening to the chatter of seagulls and geese. There were no distinctions made about who was a facilitator or participant in these moments; no hierarchy or roles. They were all just people, friends even, sharing a nice walk, some laughs and a few stories.

A lot of the young people who came to the group expressed the isolation they felt – how they didn't always feel safe to open up to their friends, families and mental health professionals. They felt the group was a place where everyone, including the facilitators, had a story about going through something, so there was no need to focus on that – because they were all much more than their struggles and labels. They liked that no one was trying to fix anyone and that people were simply there to support one another and find meaningful connection.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



Have you noticed that you relax and feel more comfortable with people you don't know well when you're doing activities? Why do you think that is?

1 of 2





What kinds of fun activities can you incorporate into your peer support

work so you can build stronger connections? List 10 ideas.

2 of 2



8. consider all the other modules



While the principles found in the entire *Where We Are At* training are applicable when working with youth and young adults, the application of some of those principles might look a little different. Regardless, please keep in mind that the core message will always stay the same.

We'd like you to consider the following topics from the other modules with a different perspective – that of working with youth and young adults.



CONTINUE

uncertainty

Description: Human beings typically don't like uncertainty and we avoid it at all costs. However, uncertainty is also the jumping-off point for creativity and possibility.



How would you apply the principle of uncertainty when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on uncertainty —

Youth and young adult's experiences and needs are unique and constantly evolving, making it difficult to fully understand or predict their behaviours or responses. Therefore, you should approach your work together with openness, flexibility and curiosity, build strong relationships and trust, and embrace ambiguity and complexity in order to effectively support their unique needs and experiences.

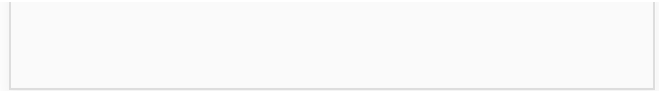
CONTINUE

learned helplessness

Description: Learned helplessness occurs when someone is exposed to a stressful situation or environment – outside of their control – repeatedly. No matter what they try, they're not able to change the situation.



How would you apply the principle of learned helplessness when working with youth and young adults?



1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on learned helplessness

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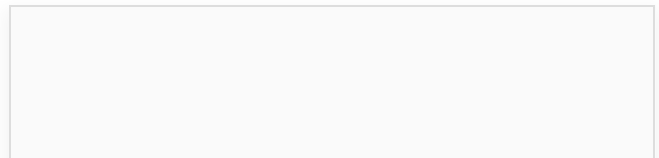
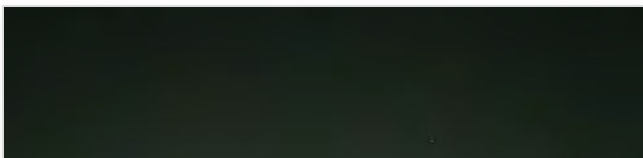
When working with youth and young adults dealing with learned helplessness, acknowledge their challenges and focus on their strengths and successes. Provide opportunities for learning and growth, encourage positive self-talk and foster a supportive and collaborative environment. These strategies can help them overcome learned helplessness and develop a sense of agency and control over their lives.

CONTINUE

mutuality

Description: The peer relationship is mutual, reciprocal and breaks down hierarchies. The peer support worker and the peer equally co-create the relationship and both participate in boundary creation.

NOTE: Mutuality is also one of the core values.





How would you apply the principle of mutuality when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on mutuality

Applying the principle of mutuality means creating a reciprocal relationship in which both you and the youth receiving support benefit from the relationship. To achieve this, shared experiences should be emphasized, active participation encouraged, trust and respect fostered, ongoing learning encouraged and empowerment emphasized.

CONTINUE

self-determination

Description: Self-determination is the right to make one's own decisions and have freedom from coercion. Peer support workers support the facilitation and creation of an environment where people feel free to tap into their inner motivation. They don't fix or save, but acknowledge and hold space for resilience and inner wisdom.

Also, consider self-determination theory.

NOTE: Self-determination is also one of the core values.



How would you apply the principle of self-determination when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on self-determination

When working with youth and young adults, it's important to foster autonomy, empowerment and provide choices. Collaboration and advocacy for their rights and needs are also important. By creating an environment that supports their recovery and promotes their well-being, we can encourage them to take ownership of their lives and make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

CONTINUE

worldview, judgements & biases

Description: Worldview is the lens through which we see the world. Our experiences inform our worldview, judgements and biases. Peer support workers need to be particularly aware of their judgements and biases and be mindful to see other people's perspectives.



How would you apply the principle of worldview, judgement and bias when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

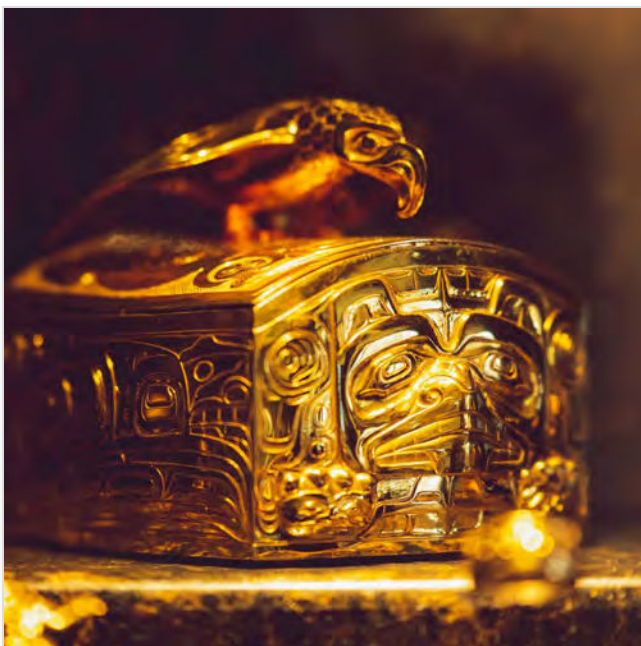
Thoughts on worldview, judgement, and bias

Being mindful of our own worldview and biases is crucial when working with youth and young adults. It helps us avoid making judgements and assumptions, build trust and inclusivity and facilitate growth and development for the young people we support. By being aware of our own biases, we can create a safe and supportive environment where young people feel comfortable sharing their experiences and feelings, regardless of their background. This is especially important when working with young people from different cultural, ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds, as it allows us to be more inclusive and respectful of diverse perspectives.

CONTINUE

cultural humility

Description: Peer support workers take care not to elevate their own culture over the culture of others. They choose to make themselves aware of the effects of colonization and interact with other cultures through a lens of awareness regarding their pain. They honour other cultures.



How would you apply the principle of cultural humility when working with youth and young adults?

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on cultural humility

Cultural humility fosters a safe and inclusive environment that recognizes and respects cultural differences. Practising cultural humility allows for an open-minded approach and the ability to learn from individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, building trust and rapport that is crucial for effective peer support. It also prevents imposing cultural beliefs or values that may be insensitive and can help prevent misunderstandings or conflicts due to cultural differences. Overall, cultural humility is essential for creating a welcoming and respectful environment that supports the unique needs and experiences of each individual.

CONTINUE

boundaries

Description: Peer support workers support the co-creation of boundaries between themselves and the people they are supporting. This means reaching clarity around what is okay and what is not okay in the relationship.



How would you apply the principle of boundaries when



working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on boundaries

Boundaries help ensure safety, professionalism, empowerment, role clarity and ethical considerations. They can create a safe and empowering environment that supports both the peer supporter and the person being supported. Boundaries establish clear expectations for the peer support relationship, avoid misunderstandings and confusion, and empower the person being supported by giving them a sense of control and autonomy.

CONTINUE

supporting someone who is experiencing loss

Description: Supporting someone who is experiencing loss means a peer support worker holds space, acknowledges the loss and gives support – without trying to fix, save or take that person’s pain away.



How would you apply the principle of supporting someone who is experiencing loss when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on supporting someone who is experiencing loss

If you've experienced loss, you are generally better equipped to provide support to youth and young adults who are also experiencing loss. You will bring a unique perspective and understanding to your role and can offer empathy and improved support skills as well as share insights about personal growth. Additionally, sharing personal experiences of loss can help to normalize the grief process and create a sense of community.

CONTINUE

supporting someone in any kind of crisis

Description: Peer support workers normalize the idea that setbacks happen to everyone. They realize that their role in supporting someone who is in crisis is to connect, provide support and be able to sit with someone in their pain.



How would you apply the principle of supporting someone in any kind of crisis when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on supporting someone in any kind of crisis

During moments of crisis, you can offer emotional support, identify coping strategies, connect the young people with resources and reduce stigma. By creating a safe and non-judgemental space, you can help them manage intense emotions and promote overall wellbeing. Through crisis support, you can help them access the help they need now and in the future.

CONTINUE

building resiliency

Description: Building resiliency means supporting one's well-being through practicing self-compassion, knowing personal limits, having a wellness plan and practicing mindfulness.



How would you apply the principle of building resiliency when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

After giving this question some thought, expand the box below for some suggestions.

Thoughts on resiliency

—

You can assist youth and young people build their resiliency by helping them identify their strengths, build social support network, and develop problem-solving skills. You can also help them develop a sense of control and build positive coping skills so they can learn to bounce back from difficult situations and adapt to challenges.



9. what is youth & young adult peer support?

Organizations oversee their youth and young adult programs differently. The ages of people served can range between 12 and 24, with some agencies considering young adults to be 19 to 29 or even older.

That's a vast spectrum of life stages and development. Peer support will look different depending on the agency and the age of people served. Still, most of what we have covered in the rest of this training will be applicable to peer supporters who work with youth.

We may be in the same age range as the person we're supporting or we may also be older. Regardless, it's essential that we're able to tap into the experiences and feelings we had when we were young.

[The Foundry](#) is a resource in B.C. that provides peer support services for youth 12 to 24 years old. They give one-to-one, virtual and group support.



The Foundry supports youth and young adults in the following ways:

- ☐ Guiding them in how to navigate healthcare systems
- ☐ Supporting their efforts to apply for financial support
- ☐ Providing them with follow-up support after a counselling session
- ☐ Assisting them with family and social challenges
- ☐ Supporting any person living with a mental health diagnosis
- ☐ Supporting any person who may be using substances in a potentially harmful way

“Like many people, I first became interested in peer support work because of how healing peer support was for me. In some of the most difficult parts of my life, peer support helped me to realize that there were other people who were “like

me” and who were not only surviving, but living well. Sometimes, they didn’t look like the picture of “normal” I was used to comparing myself to – but they were unabashedly cool people who modeled a future that I wanted and that, for the first time, felt possible to achieve.”

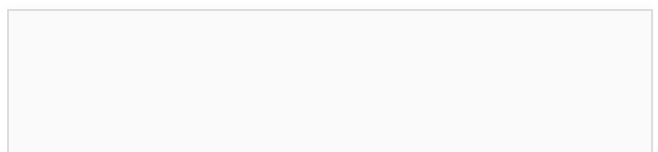
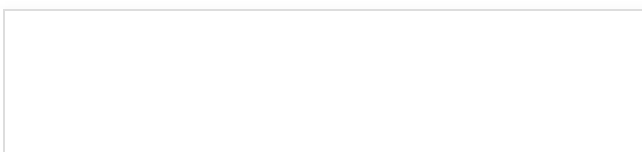
Peer support worker, The Foundry

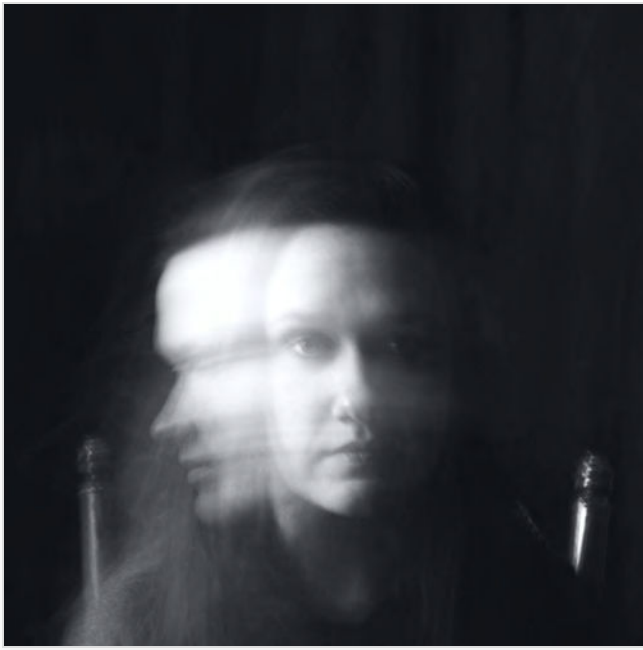
Many other organizations offer peer support for youth and young adults. The age of people served depends on the mandate of the agency – for example, some agencies provide services to people ages 19 and older.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.





Consider your experience as a young person. What were some of your biggest struggles?

1 of 3



Can you think of anything or anyone that supported you when you were in struggle?

2 of 3



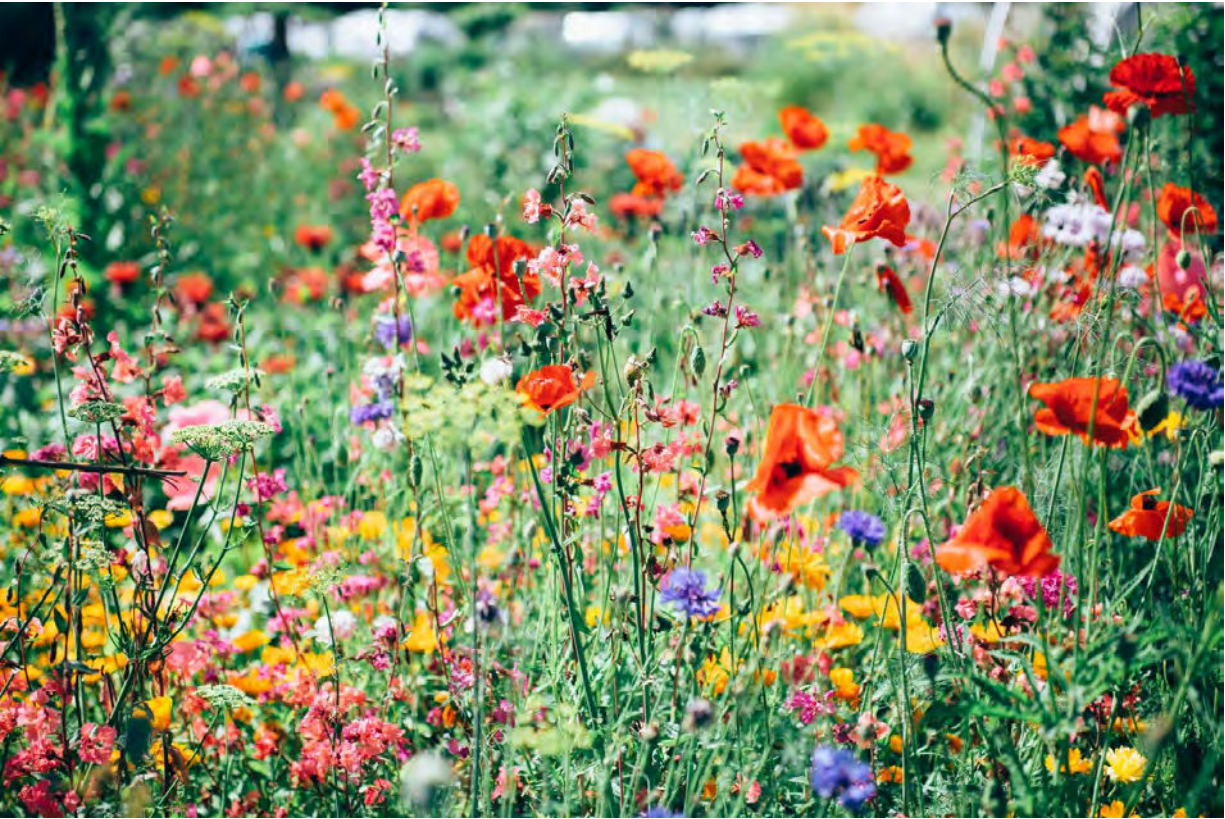


What were some big learning moments for you?

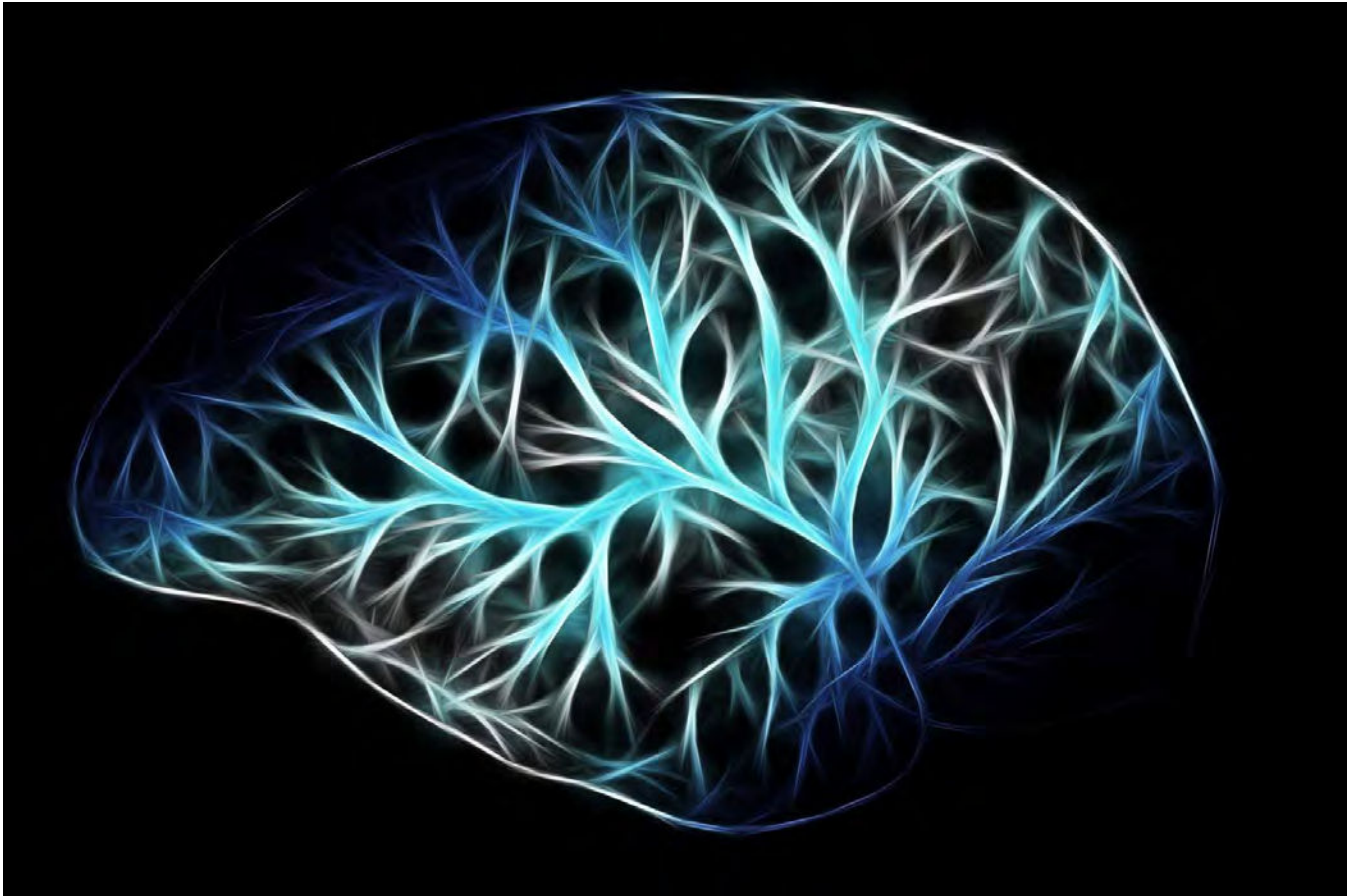
3 of 3

CONTINUE

A note about youth: When supporting youth, we shouldn't take for granted that they will act or think a certain way because of their age. Youth is an age category, but not personality type. They come in as many shades of colour as the adults they become.



10. resiliency & the developing brain



Adolescence is a challenging time during which the brain is growing and maturing. In fact, a young person's brain doesn't finish developing until about age 24 or 25.

Many factors influence young people's development. These include:

☐

Childhood experiences

☐

Environments where they live and spend their days

- ☐ Family unit
- ☐ Heredity
- ☐ Sleep patterns
- ☐ Access to healthy food
- ☐ Friend and peer groups
- ☐ Education and work expectations
- ☐ Stigma and prejudice issues
- ☐ Hormones
- ☐ Everything covered in module **9. social determinants of health**

Adolescence is also the time youth and young adults are trying to find and make sense of their place in the world and navigating this period can feel complex and scary. It's especially devastating, then, when a young person's life trajectory is derailed by a mental health diagnosis or problematic substance use. But we know that early intervention and the right supports can help them reclaim their lives.

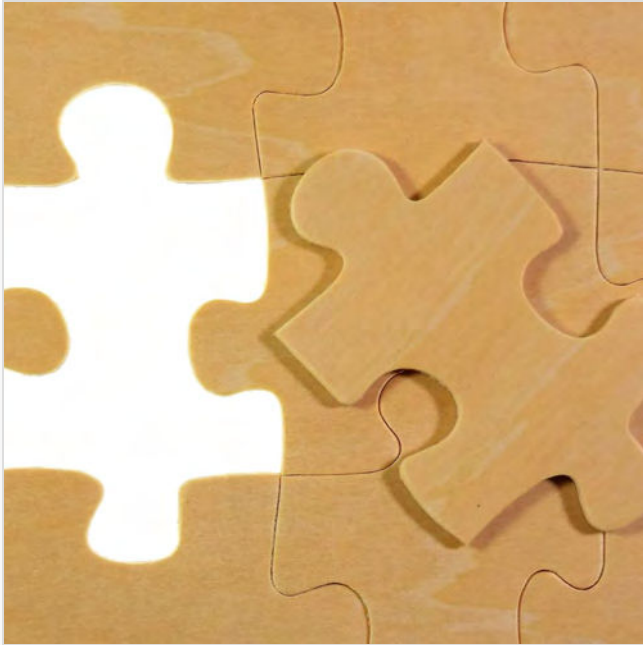
We also know that positive experiences can go a very long way in building the resiliency youth and young adults take with them into adulthood. Real connection and relationships are very important in every life stage, especially for young people who are struggling with the challenges of adolescence.

In peer support, we focus on relationship building and connection, with a focus on possibility. Peer support can be an amazing opportunity for fostering this kind of connection.

CONTINUE

question for reflection

Answer this question in your reflection journal.



What can you focus on to build connection?

1 of 1



11. a research study – indigenous youth, nature & resiliency



Historically, Indigenous cultures acknowledge the profound spiritual meaning that comes from interconnection with people, community and nature. Their teachings show we gain a greater sense of well-being when we approach life with an understanding that we are interconnected to the ecosystems around us.

A research study published in April 2020, [Land and Nature as Sources of Health and Resilience Among Indigenous Youth in an Urban Canadian Context: a Photovoice* Exploration](#) (Hatala, Njeze, Morton, Pearl, Bird-Naytowhow), explores how having a connection to nature supports the “perceived health, mental health,

resilience, and overall well-being” of Indigenous youth. This research study uses photovoice as a method of data collection and explores Indigenous youth perspectives in an inner-city Canadian context.

more about photovoice

Photovoice is something that has been used often in peer support settings. Photovoice generally includes a photograph and a meaningful caption. It’s a powerful tool to support introspection, growth and connection. The article, “Implementing Photovoice in Your Community,” describes photovoice this way:

Photovoice is a process in which people – usually those with limited power due to poverty, language barriers, race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, or other circumstances – use video and/or photo images to capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others. The pictures can then be used, usually with captions composed by the photographers, to bring the realities of the photographers’ lives home to the public and policy makers and to spur change. (Rabinowitz)

PHOTO SOURCE: AJA Project



The study explores how engagement with nature supports “meaning-making” in the lives of Indigenous youth. It draws on a growing body of evidence that tells us that a connection and accessibility to nature support our well-being and resilience.

Nature was seen here as endowed with sacred or spiritual meanings and embedded in relations that served as powerful embodied metaphors that helped youth to mitigate distressing life experiences. The trees, plants, and animals which inhabit the “land” were also highly personal beings which formed part of young people’s social and spiritual universe, and taught youth important life lessons. The youth also learned through the seasons that change is a natural part of life, and therefore, in the face of change and difficulties, they have to adapt and move on to accomplish a goal. Overall, then, this exploration builds on and can inform strengths-based work in the area of urban Indigenous youth well-being and resilience. (Hatala, Njeze, Morton, Pearl, Bird-Naytowhow. 2020)

We can learn something powerful from this study about resilience, interconnection and nature. Consider looking up the study to see some of the powerful photographs and narratives.

To read more about the topic of interconnection, visit module **1. the foundations**.



12. the need for a trauma-informed lens

Even though we talk in other modules about the importance of using a trauma-informed lens when supporting others – including module **8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care** – we felt it important to reiterate the principle here with regards to supporting youth and young adults. Adolescence and early adulthood can be very trying for many people. It's a time of life that comes with new experiences, self-discoveries and challenges. It can also be a time when people have much less freedom compared to other stages of life. As a result, many youth and young adults will come to peer support with trauma, trauma that could be recent or even ongoing. Therefore, the need to support with a trauma-informed approach is essential.

Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration of the USA (SAMHSA) identifies six principles of a trauma-informed approach:

1. safety —

Ask people what safety means to them.

2. trustworthiness & transparency —

Run operations and make decisions in a transparent way.

3. peer support

—

Place a high priority on practices like peer support.

4. collaboration & mutuality —

Take a collaborative approach.

5. empowerment, voice & choice —

Support the possibility of healing and recovery from trauma.

6. cultural, historical & gender issues —

Move past cultural stereotypes and biases, offer gender-responsive services, leverage the healing value of traditional cultural connections and recognize and address historical trauma.

For more on these principles – and other aspects of trauma-informed care – visit module **8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care**.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What are some ways you can create a sense of safety when working with youth and young adults?

1 of 6



How can you support a sense of safety for someone who is

- **LGBTQ2+**
- **Experiencing social struggles**
- **Having problems at home**
- **Using substances**

• **Living with a mental health**

2 of 6



How can you build trust and encourage transparency when working with youth and young adults?

3 of 6



How can you support a sense of collaboration and mutuality when working with youth and young adults? You might look back to the life application story for inspiration.

4 of 6



The period of adolescence can sometimes cause issues such as insecurity and low self-worth to



surface. With this in mind, how can you support a sense of empowerment, voice and choice when working with youth and young adults?

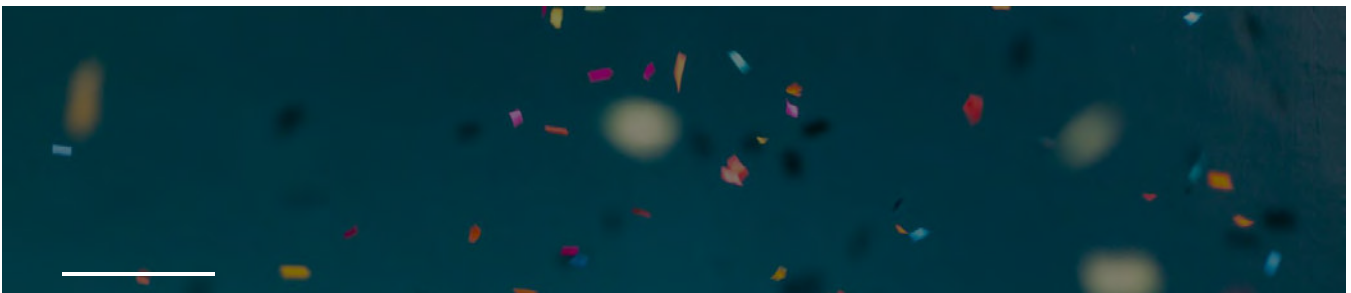
5 of 6

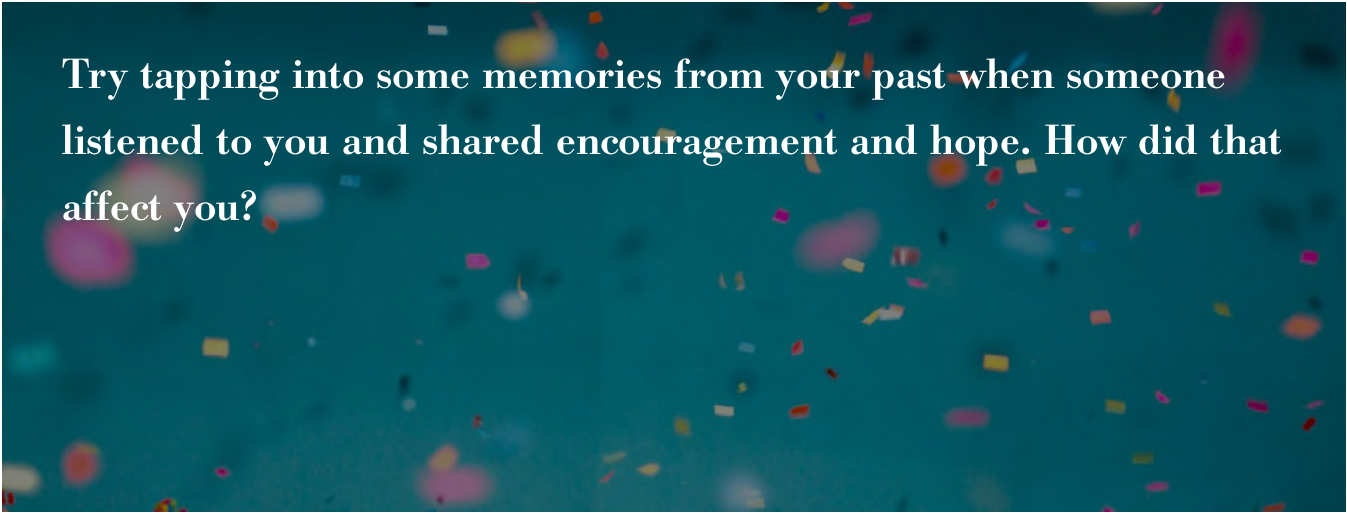


How will you support youth when considering cultural, historical and gender issues?

6 of 6

CONTINUE





Try tapping into some memories from your past when someone listened to you and shared encouragement and hope. How did that affect you?

supporting youth & young people by offering a lens of possibility

We should never treat youth and young adults as “problems to be solved.” Adolescence can be challenging for anyone, even more so when living with a mental health diagnosis or problematic substance use.

It can be devastating – especially in the midst of a struggle – to hear someone share dire predictions about your future. This approach – which is the opposite of strength-based – is anything but inspiring or supportive and can keep the people you support stuck. As someone with lived experience yourself, you likely understand how debilitating this approach can be.

Instead, hope and possibility must be at the heart of everything we do. We must also remember that the support we give should be safe, be predictable and offer a choice. We must empower youth and young adults to seek growth and new opportunities.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What are some things you can do in your work with youth and young adults to support the growth of hope and possibility?

1 of 2



We cover a strength-based approach in many modules. In your words, please describe what it means to support someone with a strength-based approach.

2 of 2

13. intersectionality & worldview

Let's look at how discrimination and bias affect our efforts to work with young people.

INTERSECTIONALITY

WORLDVIEW

In module **9. social determinants of health**, we explore the term “intersectionality,” which means a person can experience overlapping types of discrimination at the same time. This is true in B.C., where many youth and young adults outside the dominant culture experience oppression and prejudice based on gender, racial and socioeconomic issues.

INTERSECTIONALITY

WORLDVIEW

In module **3. categories & containers: unpacking our biases** module we discuss how no two people have the same worldview. This means our experiences are different from those of the people we're supporting and our ways of seeing the world will vary. This, of course, applies to youth and young adults as well.

Regardless of worldview, as peers, we always strive to support others with a horizontal, mutual approach.

supporting youth affected by intersectionality

One example of a young person who is affected by intersectionality is a Black transgender teenager who comes from a low-income household. This young person may experience discrimination and marginalization on multiple fronts due to their intersecting identities of race, gender identity and socioeconomic status.

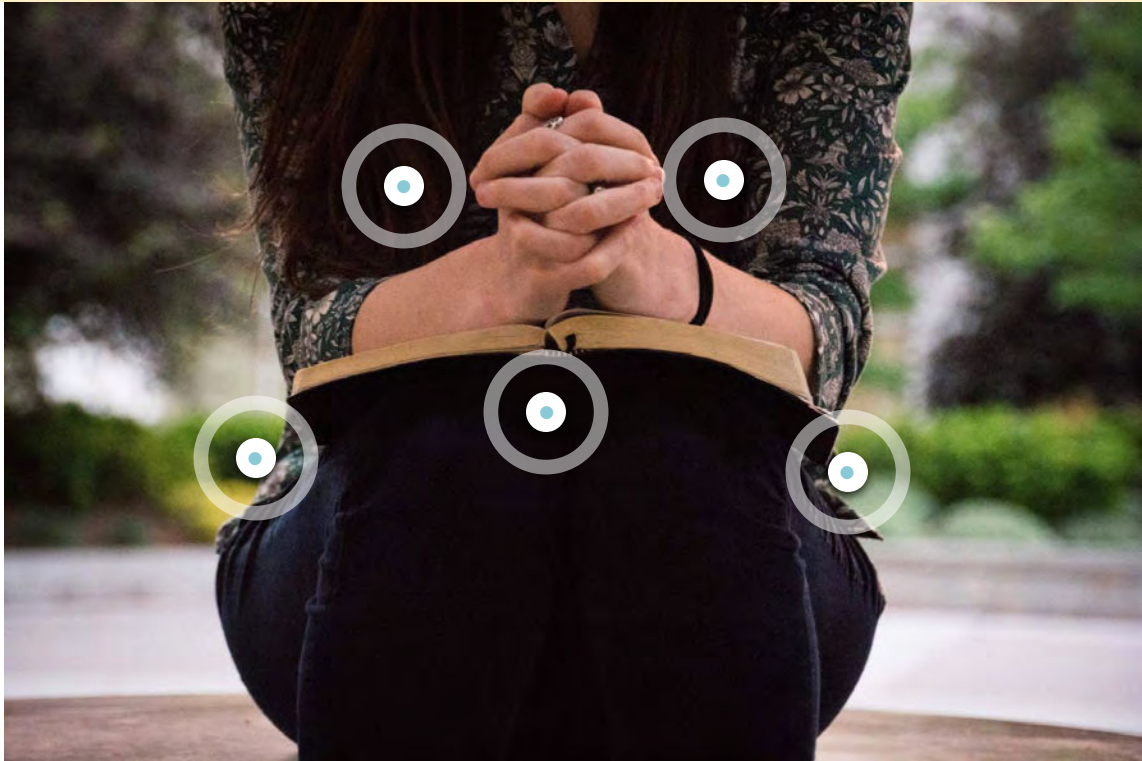
As a Black person, they may face systemic racism and discrimination in various aspects of their life, such as in education, employment and housing. As a transgender person, they may experience harassment, violence and discrimination due to their gender identity. And as someone from a low-income household, they may face economic hardships and limited access to resources and opportunities



These factors can intersect and compound to create a unique experience of marginalization and oppression for this young person. Supporting them would require understanding the ways in which their identities intersect and how those intersections impact their experiences, as well as addressing the specific challenges they face due to their intersecting identities. This could involve providing access to resources and opportunities that address the multiple barriers they face and creating a safe and inclusive environment that respects and affirms their identities.

supporting youth with a unique worldview

Suppose you are a peer support worker working with a young person who identifies as LGBTQ+ and has a deeply spiritual worldview that has been a source of conflict with their family and community. To support this youth, you could:





Create a safe and affirming space

Establish a safe and non-judgmental space where the youth can freely express their thoughts and feelings about their spirituality and LGBTQ+ identity.



Listen actively

Listen to the youth's experiences and validate their feelings, acknowledging the challenges they face due to their intersecting identities.



Encourage self-exploration

Encourage the youth to explore their own spirituality and identity in a way that is authentic and meaningful to them, rather than conforming to societal expectations or pressures from family and community.



Provide resources

Offer resources and information about organizations and communities that are inclusive and affirming of both their spiritual beliefs and their LGBTQ+ identity.



Support self-care

Help the youth identify self-care strategies that work for them, such as meditation, yoga, or other mindfulness practices that align with their spiritual beliefs.

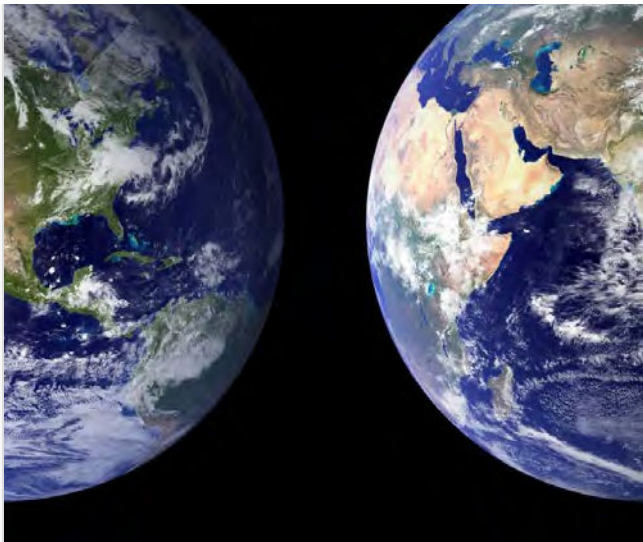
By taking these steps, you can help support a youth with a unique worldview, affirming their identities and empowering them to explore and express their authentic selves.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.





How will you work with a youth or young adult with a different worldview than your own?

1 of 3



How will you support yourself to see with a different perspective?

2 of 3



How will you support the growth of their self-determination?

14. connection & communication

Everything we cover in module 7. **connection & communication** applies to youth and young adults.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when working with youth and young adults

1

be genuine



Always be yourself. Don't try to put on an act, try to be cool or pretend to be someone you're not. Being real and relatable is way more important when working with youth and young adults.

2

be curious

Ask questions – but don't feel entitled to a response. Be sensitive to when a question might cross the line and is considered too personal. Show respect, humility and a genuine interest in your peer, and listen to them deeply and actively.

3

point out strengths

It can be hard for anyone to learn to identify their own strengths, but it can be especially hard for younger people who've had to deal with a mental health diagnosis or problematic substance use. That's why learning to identify and point out strengths is a necessary skill for peer support workers like you.

You can read more about identifying strengths in module **13. goal planning**.

4

create a horizontal relationship

Remember that you are equals.

Again, reflect back on the mutuality expressed in the life application story in **lesson 7** of this module.

5

recognize that they are the experts on themselves

Honour their experience and inner wisdom. Young people tend to close off when people are dismissive of their experiences.

6

use humour

Look for opportunities to laugh together.

7

do fun things together

Young people can feel an awkward pressure to perform when meeting in traditional office settings. This can even be the case when meeting in coffee shops. When you choose to do activities together in a non-intimidating environment, it's easier to support casual conversations that can lead to more in-depth relationship building.

Some ideas for activities are hikes, walks, trampoline parks, water activities, shopping, crafting, cooking, board games or sports.

8

get outside

Getting outside, breathing in fresh air and moving the body are all actions that can be very healing and therapeutic.

9

share success stories

When we share our experiences with young people, it builds trust and connection. Hearing personal stories that are grounded in hope are very inspiring when someone is struggling.

10

follow their lead

Let the youth set the tone for the relationship.

celebrate wins!

Celebrating small and big wins is so important, and as a peer support worker, you get to be in a position to support someone to learn to savour and celebrate these wins.

We talk about celebrating wins in module **13. goal planning**.

Human beings are inextricably interconnected. When we focus on cultivating compassion and empathy, listening deeply to understand and asking powerful questions, we increase our ability to build these connections with young people.

youth, young adults & group work

Many youth and young adult peer support programs create opportunities for group work or activities. Group work could include:

☐

Workshops

☐

Study groups

☐

Group activities



Community events

These give peer support workers fantastic opportunities to connect with their peers and build a support system.

Consider, for example, the photovoice activity we talked about in lesson 11. Activities such as this support meaning-making, creativity and an openness to new possibilities – all of which support youth to deal with uncertainty.

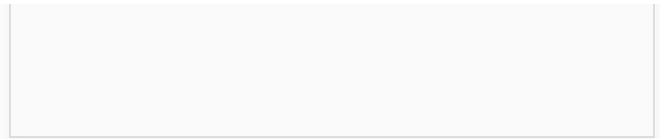
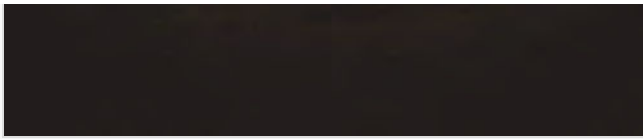
CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



List some ideas for group activities.



1 of 3



**How will you support youth to
come up with their own ideas?**

2 of 3



**How will you support creativity?
How will you support yourself to be
open to new ideas and possibilities
when working with youth and
young adults?**

3 of 3

15. wonder & awe



We feel a sense of wonder and awe when we look out onto the crashing waves of the ocean, when we see the stars on a clear night, when we listen to a symphony for the first time or we have a profound transforming experience.

Awe is about feeling both small AND deeply connected to the beautiful vastness of the earth. Many people feel a sense of wonder and awe when they're in nature.

CONTINUE



Feelings of wonder and awe can support people as they deal with uncertainty. Experiencing these feelings can also create opportunities for possibility.

An article from [Science Daily](#) entitled, "Sense of Wonderment May Relieve the Worry of Waiting for Uncertain News," states:

“An induced feeling of awe, or state of wonder, may be the best strategy yet for alleviating the discomfort that comes

from uncertain waiting.”
(2019)

Many famous scientists speak of the importance of wonder and awe in the process of learning and growing. Many studies also speak of the power of these feelings in supporting our well-being.

In short, wonder and awe are great feelings to explore when working with youth and young adults.

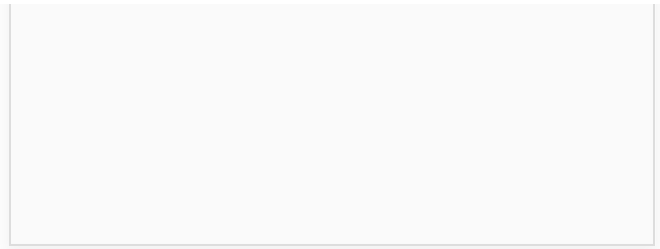
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questions for reflection

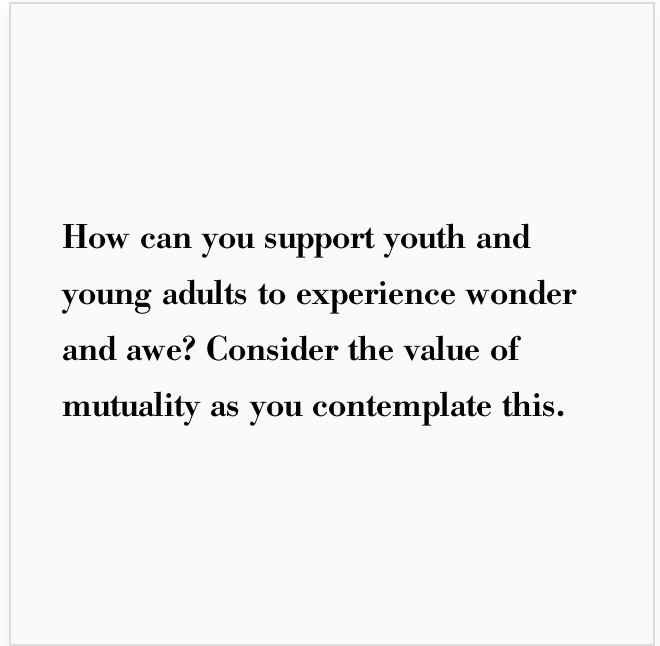
Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What are some practices you can engage in to experience a sense of wonder and awe?



1 of 2



2 of 2



16. core values assessment

question for reflection

Answer this question in your reflection journal.



In what ways have the core values (see list below) intersected with the topic of working with youth and young adults?

1 of 1

CONTINUE

core peer support values



acknowledgement —

All human beings deserve to be seen for who they are.

IN ACTION: Peer support strives to acknowledge – and deeply hear – people where they are in their journey.

PSWs SUGGEST: Asking open-ended questions and actively listening to the PSW to see if they feel comfortable sharing their experience. Ask: “What do you think about that situation?” “Is there a coping strategy that you have used in a previous similar experience that worked for you?”

mutuality —

All healthy relationships are mutual and reciprocal.

IN ACTION: Peer support relationships are co-created, with all parties participating in boundary creation.

PSWs SUGGEST: Having a conversation about what is and isn’t okay to discuss with the PSW.

“...Even though I am a PSW, it’s painful for me to make eye contact with people. Hopefully, clients will see that if I’m looking away that it actually means that I am deeply listening to them. Being vulnerable and open seems to allow the other person to do their version of the same, building trust and respect and co-creating the relationship.”

strength-based —

Every human being has strengths.

IN ACTION: Peer support intentionally builds on existing strengths. It thoughtfully and purposefully moves in the direction of flourishing, rather than only responding to pain and oppression.

PSWs SUGGEST: Finding things that the PSW feels really confident about and expanding on those areas or delving into those areas and supporting their choices.

self-determination —

Motivation works best when it's driven from within.

IN ACTION: Peer support encourages self-determination and acknowledges and holds space for resilience and inner wisdom.

PSWs SUGGEST: Support the PSW in making decisions and doing things on their own – based on their wants, needs and goals.

respect, dignity and equity —

All human beings have intrinsic value.

IN ACTION: Peer support honours human value by

- Practicing cultural humility and sensitivity
- Serving with a trauma-informed approach
- Offering generosity of assumption
- Addressing personal biases mindfully
- Meeting people where they are
- Serving with a knowledge of equity

PSWs SUGGEST: Treat PSWs as you would like to be treated and expect to be treated. Learn about them on a personal level and treat them as equals.

belonging and community —

All human beings need to belong and be a part of a community.

IN ACTION: Peer support recognizes that many people have barriers that keep them from developing community and it actively works towards deconstructing those social blockades that prevent inclusion and acceptance. Peer support encourages a social justice mindset, and intentionally promotes empathy, compassion and self-compassion.

PSWs SUGGEST: Help PSWs feel wanted and cared about. Help them find resources that foster a sense of community and belonging.

“My quality of life improves immensely when I am surrounded by one or a community of people who understand me. I don’t feel alone. I can be myself among people who I know understand me on a deeper level. When I feel like I can be myself, I feel more confident and able to take positive risks, thus improving the quality of my life. The root of this is connection and being able to be seen for who I truly am. Peers can help people be seen in a real way.”

curiosity —

Curiosity and inquiry support connection, growth, learning and engagement.

IN ACTION: Peer support

- Is continually curious
- Challenges assumptions and narratives
- Asks powerful questions
- Offers generosity of assumption to those who think differently
- Knows that listening and asking questions is more important than providing answers

PSWs SUGGEST: Ask questions and be engaged in learning about your PSWs. Find out about their culture and explore with them.



17. summary

Let's review some of the key concepts covered in this course.

- ☐ The principles of the entire course can be applied in unique ways when dealing with youth and young adults.
- ☐ Many organizations provide peer support services for youth and young adults.
- ☐ Early intervention and the right supports can help young people reclaim their lives after being derailed by mental health or substance use issues.
- ☐ Studies show how engagement with nature supports “meaning-making” in the lives of Indigenous youth and draws on a growing body of evidence that tells us that a connection and accessibility to nature support our well-being and resilience.
- ☐ Many youth and young adults experience trauma and need peer support services with a trauma-informed approach.
- ☐ Many youth experience several types of discrimination and bias at the same time and need supportive peer services.
- ☐ Youth and young adults benefit when included in group work or activities.
- ☐ Experiencing awe and wonder supports youth dealing with uncertainty.



18. next steps

We want to thank you for taking the time to walk alongside peer support workers on a shared path of learning from lived experience.

You are now ready to visit another module of the Peer Support Worker training Curriculum!

Please head home to <https://peerconnectbc.ca> where you will find the individual training modules and facilitation guides. You will also find a [resource page](#) at that site to continue your learning about peer support work and the issues surrounding it.

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19. module references

The following sources were used
for this module:



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University of California – Riverside. (2019, June 24). ["Sense of wonderment may relieve the worry of waiting for uncertain news."](#) *ScienceDaily*.

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