Advanced Skills for Youth- and Young Adult-Driven Practice: Recognizing and Managing the Urge to Lead

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TA NETWORK

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This Learning Community is hosted by Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, a partner in the National TA Network for Children's Behavioral Health, operated by and coordinated through the University of Maryland.

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Introductions

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Agenda
- Learning objectives
- Guiding without leading
- Common mistakes
- Youth-driven techniques
- When risk is involved
- Wrap-up

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Learning Objectives

After today, you will be able to:

- Recognize the way providers commonly insert their own perspectives, values and agendas into conversations with young people
- Identify the potential consequences of this, and
- Describe some skills and techniques providers can use to stay youth-driven, even in situations of risk

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Videos

- During this presentation, you will view videos of providers working with youth.
- All participants in the videos have signed media release forms and agreed to the video being shown in webinars and trainings.
- Videos are of actual practice, and are obtained by PSU through our Achieve My Plan (AMP) enhancement training.

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Recognizing the urge to lead

When does it happen, and why is it a problem?

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Guiding without leading

- In youth and young-adult driven conversations, the provider strives to elicit and prioritize the young person's perspective while still accomplishing the goals of their intervention
- We call this Guiding Without Leading, or GWOL
- GWOL is a delicate balancing act and it can be easy to slip into leading to much or guiding too little

Too much leading

Too little guiding

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What does leading too much look like?

- Sometimes it might be easy to sense that you are taking too much of a lead in a conversation - for instance, if you find yourself talking a lot, or when the young person is planning to do something you disagree with and you feel the impulse to convince them not to (i.e. dropping out of school, running away, etc.)
- Other times, we might lead too much without even realizing we are inserting our own perspectives, values or agenda into the conversation

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Common ways providers take the lead

- Making suggestions
  - Planning next steps
    - "You should follow up with that job you applied to in a few weeks."
  - Identifying support
    - "I bet your advisor would be able to help."
  - Making plans for the future (particularly school or vocational)
    - "DHS will pay for school, so that's definitely an option for you."
  - Strengths inventory/exploration
    - "I think you're a really good writer - do you agree?"

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Common ways providers take the lead

- Overemphasizing/highlighting one idea over another
    - While brainstorming, a provider may stay silent or react neutrally to certain ideas the young person proposes but react enthusiastically or even just say something like "nice" or "that's a good one" to others
- Giving a restricted choice of options
    - "So either I can call your counselor and ask if they're available or you can."
- Leading questions - questions that are looking for a certain answer, or "mind-reading"

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Leading questions

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Consequences of leading too much

- Emphasis on one of the young person's ideas over another:
    - Young person may feel hurt
    - Young person may choose an idea or plan in order to please the provider

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Consequences of leading too much

- Suggestions or advice
  - Young person may feel manipulated, unheard, or that you think they are incapable of making their own plans, decisions, etc.
  - Removes the opportunity to build self-determination skills

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- Leading questions meant to teach a lesson
  - Young person may feel judged, belittled, or condescended to
  - Consequences have already happened, and young person has likely heard the same from others in their life

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Tips and Techniques
Youth-driven skills for one-on-one conversations

Guiding without leading

- Notice the urge to lead - what does it feel like?
  - Often: impatience, anxiety
- Interrupt the urge to lead
- Remain: attentive, curious, open-minded, confident

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Conversational techniques

- The Goldilocks Effect
  - Help the young person to identify the amount of support that is "just right" for them in completing a task, rather than suggesting what support (and which supports) you think would be appropriate
  - "Okay, so you've identified some great next steps here! What kind of support do you need to complete these?"
- Highlight all the goals, ideas, strengths or activities the young person comes up with during brainstorming, instead of reacting only to certain ones. Likewise, make sure to celebrate all the young person's accomplishments along the way to achieving their goals, even the seemingly small ones
    - "This is a great list you've come up with!"

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Conversational techniques

- "Just go with it"
  - Don't be too rigid in sticking to a set activity/worksheet/curriculum: provide space for the young person to share their jokes, examples, and stories
- Keep it conversational
  - Ask follow-up questions, and reflect on what the young person is saying, especially if it seems important, meaningful, or if they have mentioned it more than once

Keeping it conversational

Conversational techniques

- When you realize you have inserted your own perspective or have been leading too much, catch yourself and apologize
  - "I'm sorry, you probably know better than I do what would work - what do you think is a good next step?"

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Managing the urge to lead

Staying youth-driven when risk is involved

When risk is involved

- In situations in which the young person is planning to do something that concerns you or with which you disagree, the urge to insert your perspective in the conversation will likely be stronger and resisting this urge will be more challenging
  - For example: discontinuing treatment, dropping out of school, running away from home, planning to strengthen a relationship with someone you disapprove of

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Common mistakes providers make

- Overreacting
  - Young person may be testing the waters, or want help exploring their options or consequences
- Making suggestions, giving advice, lecturing, attempting to talk the young person out of their decision
  - Unlikely to change the young person's mind, and likely to damage trust and rapport
- "Therapizing"

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What do you think of the provider's strategy?

- First: remember it is not your responsibility to "solve" or "fix" the situation
- Trust the process
- Recognize this as an opportunity to build trust and self-determination skills

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Conversational Techniques

- Open-ended questions
  - Use open-ended questions to explore the young person's feelings and reasoning around their decision
- Reflections
  - Listen and reflect on what you are hearing - focus on getting it right rather than changing their mind
- Exploring consequences
  - If the young person wants to think about the different options, generate a list of possible choices and the pros and cons of each

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**Things to Consider
When Making a Decision**

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1.   Potential options

Option 1: -
Option 2: -
Option 3: -

2.   Weigh the pros and cons

Option 1

PROS   CONS

Option 2

PROS   CONS

Option 3

PROS   CONS

3.   How will the different options affect me now, and in the future?

4.   Decision: Which of the three options is best?

5.   Action Steps:

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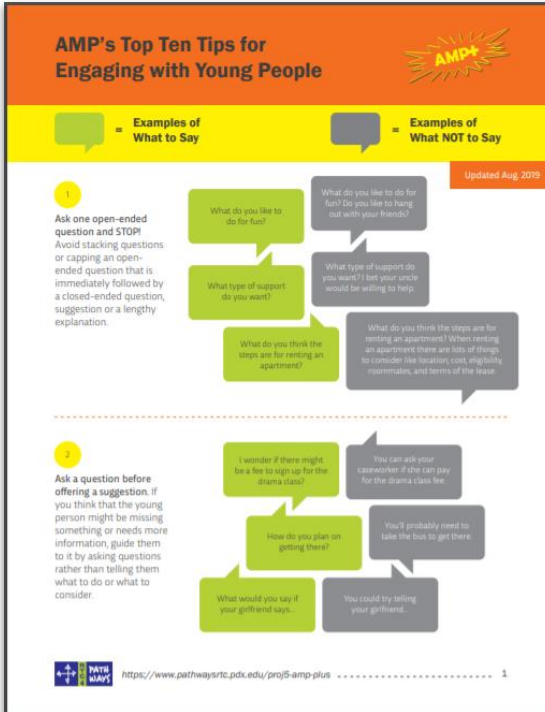
Further resources

- [AMP's Top Ten Tips for Engaging with Young People (tip sheet)](#)
- [Pathways' eLearning tools](#)
- [AMP and PLUS training](#)

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Questions?

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