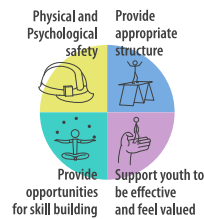




Programs that foster the development of autonomy and competence:



5. Ensure physical and psychological safety

For youth to get the most out of their participation, it is essential that they feel safe at all times. Intentionally building social and emotional competencies may contribute to creating this sense of safety. For example, youth can collaborate to develop and decide upon shared group guidelines. Actively reflecting and inquiring about their own behaviour improves personal development, psychological well-being, and interactions with others. When youth feel safe, they will be more likely to learn and participate freely.

Ensure physical and psychological safety putting it into practice [checklist \[PDF\]](#)



6. Provide appropriate structure

Appropriate structure includes creating an environment that has clear boundaries, expectations, and adult support/supervision as required. This feature involves providing a consistent environment to ensure participants not only feel safe within the environment, but also comfortable returning to it.

Programs with unstructured time combined with a lack of skill-building opportunities and low adult involvement tend to lack positive social relations and lead to negative outcomes. However, it is important to consider the role of the specific youth involved, the social context, and unstructured time, to understand its potential advantages and disadvantages. When designing programs, ensure supports, such as adult involvement and established positive social norms, are in place for “unstructured” components.

Create opportunities to belong putting it into practice [checklist \[PDF\]](#)



7. Support youth to be effective and feel valued

The goal of youth programming should extend beyond attendance. Participation must include active engagement to result in positive developmental benefits. Young people need to feel that they matter, that their ideas matter, and that they have the capacity to make a difference. It is important for youth to see the results of their decision-making. The academic literature uses the words efficacy and mattering for these concepts.

Support youth to be effective and to feel valued putting it into practice [checklist \[PDF\]](#)



8. Provide opportunities for skill building

Young people benefit from opportunities to learn and practice new and meaningful skills. Tasks that do not fit a young person’s interests or are not challenging enough, are not meaningful. Mastering increasingly challenging tasks builds confidence and competence and leads to positive development. Programs that empower youth and foster meaningful skill-building usually include multiple sessions per week, individualized feedback, and appropriately challenging tasks.

Provide opportunities for skill building putting it into practice [checklist \[PDF\]](#)

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Resources

[Ensure physical and psychological safety checklist \[PDF\]](#)

[Provide appropriate structure checklist \[PDF\]](#)

[Support youth to be effective and to feel like they matter checklist \[PDF\]](#)

[Provide opportunities for skill building checklist \[PDF\]](#)

[Interventions chapter in Youth Who Thrive: A review of critical factors and effective practices for 12-25 year olds \[PDF\]](#)



