

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Purpose: To provide participants with additional tips for working in partnership.

Materials: Handouts: “Tips and Tricks for Working with Adults as Partners” and “Tips and Tricks for Working with Youth as Partners”; Paper cut in half sheets, magic markers

Time: 40 minutes

Procedure:

Explain that by using the expertise in this room we are going to have youth come up with tips for working with adults and have adults come up with tips for working with youth. Divide the youth into small groups and the adults into small groups. Each group is to come up with ten tips. Give groups about 15 minutes to come up with their tips. Begin with one youth group asking for just two tips; put those up and then ask for different ones from each group. Once you are done asking all youth groups for two tips then begin again with the first group to see if they have any additional tips to offer. Now do the same process with adults. Do that until everyone has put all their tips on the board.

Discussion Questions:

1. How hard was it to come up with tips?
2. What tip up here speaks to you the most?
3. Which tip might you go back and try right away?

“We have found a list with a few tips developed by the Promise Project that we would like to share. As you’ll see, some of them are very similar, but we wanted to make sure you walked away with this list and we will type up the one you created and mail it to you if you’ve given us your name and address.” Hand out the resource list.

Leader’s Notes

You can once again have all adults stand against one wall and all youth stand against the other so you can divide easily.

Leader's Notes

Someone will be responsible after the workshop for typing up the list and ensuring all participants receive a copy.

Tips and Tricks for Working with Adults as Partners

Criticism doesn't necessarily equate to condescension. Sometimes when adults offer criticism of a youth, they are just treating the youth the same way they would a colleague. Try to remember that adults are used to critiquing each other's ideas. Just because they don't agree with you, doesn't mean that they are dismissing you.

Adults may not be aware of how capable you are. Maybe they don't know any youth your age, so they just don't know what to expect. You can enlighten them by showing them that you are capable of handling mature situations. You can tell them a hundred times that you are mature, but showing them is the best way to make your case.

Adults will feel responsible for the success or failure of the project. This is what makes it hard for them to share authority over it. They need your reassurance that you are willing to share in both the successes and the failures too.

Adults are just as uncertain as youths; they have just learned to disguise it more. "I have positive interactions with youth on a regular basis," insisted one survey respondent. "Or maybe I delude myself."



Taken from "Younger Voices, Stronger Choices," Kansas City, Promise Project, a Joint Effort of the Junior League of Kansas City, MO, Inc. and Kansas City Concensus, 1997

Tips and Tricks for Working with Youth as Partners

Don't expect more from youth than you would from another adult. In much the same way that minorities feel they have to be better than their white counterparts to get the same rewards, young people do too. When a young person shows up 15 minutes late for a meeting, an adult will think, "Ah hah, a slacker. Irresponsible kid." When a fellow adult shows up 15 minutes late, the same person will think "That's understandable. They've got deadlines and pressures and schedules." So do young people.

Make sure that you don't hold the young person to a stricter standard than the adults. No, they may not hold down full-time jobs, but they have other commitments and pressures and schedules that cry for their attention. And they will agonize more over their performance than an adult. In dealing with any new relationship, there is a caution or tentativeness. You both watch closely for signs that this might not work out. Don't exaggerate this tendency and expect the youth's performance to exceed that of adults.

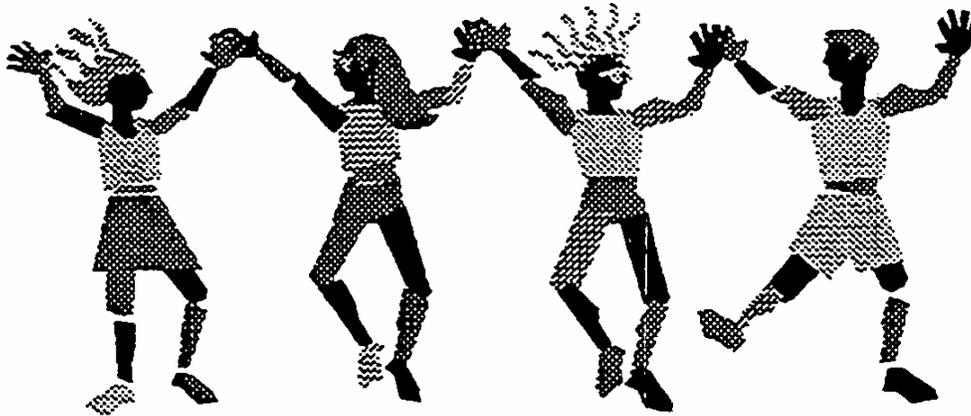
Conversely, don't excuse all indiscretions just because you are dealing with a youth. Some of the survey respondents commented that they couldn't find fault with youth. When asked to recount the dumbest thing a youth has ever said to you, one respondent claims, "I realize I am much more gracious with young people than adults. I can't think of something I would classify as dumb from a youth, but I can think of several from adults." Sometimes adults tend not to expect enough from young people.

Treat youths as individuals; don't make one youth represent all youths. Young people will put enough pressure on themselves. They understand that adults may carry negative images of young people and may generalize from the behavior of a few. Don't add to it by making them feel that they must speak for or represent all youths. You wouldn't do that for another adult. Assure the young people that you are interested in their individual opinions and don't expect them to embody an entire population.

Be careful about interrupting. Kids get discouraged easily. Let them finish their ideas. For the partnership to work, young people must feel that they are valued and respected by adults. In many of their outside relationships, this respect is lacking and they are inherently wary of adults. When interrupted by an adult, they will tend to stop talking (sometimes permanently). To prevent this and create an environment that fosters equal participation, adults need to be hyper-sensitive about interrupting a young person, and young people need to be encouraged to persevere with their point despite adult interruptions. Both parties need to respect others in their right to voice opinions without criticism or censure.

Remember that your role in a partnership is not to parent. While being a parent may be the most important role that any adult can play, the purpose of youth-adult partnerships is to give young people a different way to relate to adults.

Don't move too fast. Remember that this is all new for the young people. Don't move too fast without explaining the reasons for actions taken. Rushing through meetings can be a sign that adults are still trying to control the actions of the group.



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