

Tips for Adults when Working with Youth Leaders

A youth-adult partnership (YAP) is one in which adults work in full partnership with young people on issues facing youth and/or on programs and policies affecting youth. The YAP framework uplifts youth experiences and encourages young people to lend their expertise and be part of designing programs and policies that impact them.

NINE TIPS FOR ADULTS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUTH

- 1. Communicate openly**, especially in regards to the required level of involvement. The roles and tasks that derive from the projects should be meaningful and evenly distributed.
- 2. Be honest** about the expectations of the project goal and youth contribution. Make sure that the expectations for youth are realistic and fair.
- 3. Establish clear and tangible goals.** The goal of partnering with youth is not just about starting a project and meeting the goal but to create a long-term relationship and to build more support for current projects and future ones. Goals do not necessarily need to be related to the organization but could be a goal that aims for personal growth.
- 4. Understand where young people are coming from.** There will be times that they will say no. Just put yourself in their shoes and acknowledge that they need to say no to keep up with other important responsibilities in their life. They also need the energy to continue to do the work. Do not react negatively to a young person saying they are unable to take something on.
- 5. Acknowledge each individual's voice.** Just because you hear one young individual say something, it does not mean another young individual feels the same way. It is essential to recognize that youth voices are different and vary. Each voice should be valued and considered.
- 6. Support and connect** young people to opportunities. Partnering with youth for community change is great, but providing or putting youth in the right direction of resources for social, mental, behavioral, and emotional services can make a big difference in a young person's life.
- 7. Seek out resources.** As adults, there may be a disconnect with youth because of generational differences and ageism. It is important to seek out **resources** on youth health and development to learn how to partner with young people. It is equally vital to attend different training sessions and workshops on the topic.
- 8. Be flexible.** Young people go through much more than what people think they do. Life does not always go the way that we want it, so it is important to be accommodating to each young individual's life and to be understanding of the schedule changes.
- 9. Create a safe and welcoming space for everyone.** Some ways to create a safe space for all include being a friendly face, using appropriate language, being non-judgemental, accepting, and reassuring how young people are needed/wanted for the projects to be able to make a difference.