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Shining Light on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Toolkit to Build Understanding

Developed by: *Wichita State University Center for Combating Human Trafficking* // In Partnership With: *MANY*

TOPIC: Positive Youth Development

Developed by:



In Partnership With: *MANY*

Wichita State University Center for Combating Human Trafficking (combatinghumantrafficking.org) // MANY (www.many.net.org)

Positive Youth Development

This resource is one of several topics addressed in the [Shining Light on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Toolkit to Build Understanding](#). The toolkit is designed to be a resource for multidisciplinary professionals, policy makers, volunteers, faith communities, and others involved in anti-trafficking work. While the information provided on each topic is in no way exhaustive, you will find additional resources to facilitate further study.

Each topic is addressed in three sections. First, the “**what?**”— what we know about the topic which includes a review of what we know from both research and the field. “**So what?**” addresses what this means – the reason this information is important to understand and how it will enhance our response to trafficking. “**Now what?**” considers the implications of this information in practice - how the information can be used to enhance our response to human trafficking. This includes specific implications for mentoring relationships, when applicable.

What?

Positive Youth Development (PYD) has become an increasingly popular method for promoting healthy development with youth. PYD emphasizes the ability of youth to succeed when given the opportunity to take part in positive relationships with adults and learn by participating in constructive activities within their communities. This model shifts the way that youth have been viewed in the past. Youth are not problems that must be dealt with; they are resources with potential to make a positive impact.

- **A core aspect of PYD is the belief that all youth have the potential for positive growth and the ability to develop into successful and healthy adults** (*Lerner et al., 2005; Thomsen, 2004; Zaff et al., 2016*).
- **Youth are viewed as partners or producers of their own development** (*Larson, 2006; Sanders et al., 2015; Thomsen, 2004*).
- **Unlike the traditional deficit model, PYD does not focus on problems.** PYD recognizes that youth have strengths within themselves and their environment. PYD aims to tap into those strengths in order to promote healthy development and growth (*Erdem et al., 2016; Sanders et al., 2015; Thompson, 2004; Zaff et al., 2016*).
- **While PYD recognizes the strength and capacity of all young adults to change, many youth face barriers that prevent them from progressing toward healthy development** (*Larson, 2006*). PYD believes that relationships can be instrumental in motivating youth to work toward positive development (*Erdem et al., 2016; Larson 2006*).
- **One way PYD has been conceptualized is through the 5 C's: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring** (*Bowers et al., 2010; Erdem et al., 2016; Fuller, 2013 Pittman, K, et al., 1996*). Youth who demonstrate these characteristics, are more likely to progress toward a 6th C, contribution to self, family, and society (*Lerner & Lerner, 2011*). In contrast, youth who do not possess the 5 C's are more likely to have personal and behavioral issues.

— The 5 C's provide a mechanism for analyzing PYD and to determine if youth are developing cognitive abilities, social connections, self-esteem, boundaries, moral codes, and empathy for others.

So What?

- **Believing and recognizing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) victims/survivors can overcome their past trauma and achieve their full potential is essential for all those working in the anti-trafficking movement.**
- **CSEC victims/survivors have found ways to survive despite limited resources and assistance.** (*cont.*)

So What? (cont.)

- (cont.) PYD suits victims/survivors of trafficking because it recognizes and builds upon these naturally occurring strengths. PYD is most effective when participants are encouraged to use their “personal agency and participation in decision making” (Sanders et al., 2015, p. 41).
- **In mentoring CSEC victims/survivors, there are various “issues” or “problems” that the traditional deficit model would focus on.** PYD encourages mentors to focus on the strengths of their mentee and understand and acknowledge the characteristics that helped them survive in order to improve their life.
- **Many people face obstacles to development, such as changes in motivation, competing needs, environmental factors, and undeveloped skills** (Larson, 2006). All youth, and particularly CSEC victims/survivors, need support to effectively navigate these developmental hurdles. This makes mentoring relationships vital for the positive development of this population.

Now What?

General Practice Implications

Individuals

- **Everyone is capable of positive development.** However, before any growth can occur, basic survival needs such as food, clothing, hygiene, shelter, and safety needs must be met.
- **Youth supporters should identify youth’s strengths and share the strengths they see with youth.**

Service Providers

- **Training on PYD for all staff and volunteers is essential.** One bad interaction (i.e. one person who chooses to focus on deficits) can be detrimental. Ultimately, it is quality of service delivery that makes the biggest impact (Sanders, 2015).

Community

- **Educate partners and communities about PYD.**
- **Advocate for use of PYD over traditional deficit-focused interventions.**

“Youth are not problems that must be dealt with; they are resources with potential to make a positive impact.”

Mentoring Practice Implications

Individuals

- **From a PYD perspective, a mentor's role is to partner, inspire, and support their mentee's capacity for growth** (Larson, 2006). Youth are more likely to sustain positive growth and development when they have ownership in the process (either in reference to themselves or others). Encourage them to speak kindly to themselves and to others.
- **To successfully implement PYD, mentors need to learn how to guide their mentee while still ensuring they (mentee) have ownership** (Larson, 2006).
 - This is a delicate balance. Often, to save their mentee from making mistakes, mentors can become authoritative. Unfortunately, this often leads to the mentee losing interest. On the other hand, mentors wanting too much to appease their mentee can give in to all requests and fail to provide constructive feedback or challenge their mentee to grow.
 - Achieving the proper balance of guidance and youth agency/direction is ultimately dependent on trust. When trust is established, mentees will see their mentors as someone who cares for them and has their best interest at heart. This allows the mentor more opportunity to encourage agency while also providing constructive feedback (Larson, 2006).
- **Use the 5 C's as a way to assess progress and set goals. Mentees should see progress in each of the 5 C's: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring.** Design and spend time doing activities that specifically increase one of the 5 C's (for example: to enhance confidence, ask your mentee to teach you a skill at which they excel).

Service Providers

- **Mentors should be trained on PYD and encouraged to implement PYD methods into their relationship with their mentee.** Provide guidance on various process models grounded in PYD that could be used as a framework or way of thinking about mentoring interactions (Larson, 2006). For example:
 - [Authoritative parenting style](#) can be adapted to a mentoring relationship. In this model, a mentor communicates his or her own values and expectations in addition to listening and encouraging the mentee to consider and communicate their values and expectations. The mentee has responsibilities and a role in the decision making (Larson, 2006).
 - Instrumental scaffolding is similar to coaching. In this model, the mentor does not direct or teach, but rather offers suggestions and tips for accomplishing a goal. The mentor helps their mentee to think about things more broadly, considering long-term goals and plans, thereby helping their mentee to think critically and problem solve (Larson, 2006).
 - Motivational scaffolding is modeling enthusiasm, helping mentee achieve realistic goals, and aiding in the process if barriers appear. Mentors help their mentee select goals that match their ability and are achievable in order to maximize engagement (Larson, 2006).
 - In addition, mentors should aim to engage their mentees in real world learning. Mentors should provide opportunities for the youth to explore and try new things, always ensuring they reflect on those experiences (what went well, what didn't go well, and what they might do differently).
 - A mentor should help their mentee to find and develop support outside of the mentoring relationship that also encourages positive development (i.e. youth programs, sports, faith-based activities, jobs, etc.).

Now What? (cont.)

— Finally, a mentor can support their mentee in identifying, connecting, and developing relationships with other caring adults in their family and community. As a youth enhances their natural circle of support they are provided with longer-term and diverse opportunities for connection and continued support.

Community

- **Provide youth with opportunities to practice leadership in the community.**
- **View youth as resources rather than problems.**

Resources

- [Mentoring and Positive Youth Development](#)
- [Positive Youth Development Resource Manual](#)
- [Understanding Youth Development Model](#)
- [Developing 5 C's in Youth](#)



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