

Adulthood & Authentic Youth Collaboration

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Today we will...

- *Be introduced to the youth collaboration methodology and framework.*
- *Explore concepts of adultism.*
- *Learn how to reframe adultism and be true collaborators with youth and young adults.*



Adulthood

What is Adulthood?

- **Adulthood describes the systems of privileged attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that adults have over those of young people.** We sometimes see this play out when youth and young adults are stereotyped and discriminated against based on age.
- **Adulthood is driven by behaviors and attitudes that are based on the assumption that adults are better than young people** and, therefore, entitles them to act upon or on behalf of young people without their agreement.
- **Calling out adulthood whenever and wherever it shows up in working with young people is necessary for authentic youth collaboration,** as it permeates housing systems and our culture.



Ageism vs Adulthood

Ageism

Ageism describes the systems of privileged attitudes and behaviors that younger people have over elders.

EXAMPLE

Denied job because because of the assumption they won't be able to produce as much as someone younger

Adulthood

Adulthood describes the systems of privileged attitudes and behaviors that adults have over those of young people.

EXAMPLE

Denied job because of the assumption that young people are not responsible



Adulthood in Common Language

- *“Respect your elders -- they know better”*
- *“Older and wiser”*
- *“You’re childish”*
- *“They are immature”*
- *“Kids don’t know what their doing”*
- *“These kids aren’t prepared for the work.”*
- *“Too young/Not old enough”*
- *“Children should be seen, not heard”*
- *“Stay in a child’s place”*
- *“The more you live, the more you know”*
- *Others?*

Sample Adultist Behavior

- Talking to an older adult instead of speaking to YYA directly
- Assuming that YYA know less because of their age
- Treating YYA poorly because of their age
- Not responding to YYA's complaints of poor service or micro aggressions
- Assuming that you know what YYA need instead of asking them
- Not providing a clear descriptions, tasks assignments, and role delineation
- Not providing the proper training, information, and guidance to younger colleagues
- Not being responsive to YYA's needs or desires for service/housing
- Designing programs and services without consulting YYA
- Others?



Adultism

GOAL: To take a read on how we are doing when it comes to centering our work in equity

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1** We want to know where you fall on the scale. To get started review the question in the gray box below.
- 2** To provide your feedback use the pen icon on the toolbar on left side of the jam board to mark on the scale below how you're feeling about the question.
- 3** We will discuss as folk are marking their ratings on the scale below!

Adultism Meter

Question: As of today, how would you rate your community on addressing adultism?

1



What's that?



5



We have knowledge of it



10



We call out and reframe as we see it

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How to Identify and Reframe Adulthood

Like many -isms or systemic oppressions, adulthood is learned very early in life and, though it's all around, it is often invisible until it is pointed out. The learned ideas and behaviors of adulthood come with harmful effects, including creating and perpetuating divisive power imbalances in collaborations between young people and adult partners.

- Unlearn oppressive behavior
- Replace old beliefs with new attitudes
- Take action against oppression (see something, say something)
- Be consistent and intentional about authentic collaboration
- Remember, we all have been the oppressed, the oppressor, and the ally.

How do I reframe adulthood?



Behavior Rooted in Adulthood:

Assuming you know what is best for youth because you are older or more experienced than them.

Inviting participation from youth merely to create the impression of inclusion and diversity.

Asking youth to speak publicly without proper information and training.

Behavior Rooted in Equity:

Respecting youth as the experts of their own lives and experiences.

Meaningful engagement that honors, respect, and celebrate differences among YYAs.

Actively listening to the opinions of YYA with the intention of creating solutions based on their feedback.



How do we Fight Adultism?

1. *By consistently and intentionally making opportunities for authentic collaboration*
2. *By standing up, voicing observations, and interrupting as allies when adultism (oppression) is occurring*
3. *By understanding and incorporating the intersectional nature of our social identities and oppression, particularly how this plays out for young people*
 - ***This is particularly critical in the work to prevent and end youth homelessness.***

Authentic Youth Collaboration & Adulthood

Identify & Reframe Exercise

Scenario: A group of youth with lived experience of homelessness has been assembled to provide feedback on how to improve services in their community. They are asked to only speak about ways to improve basic direct services and not how to address systemic issues within the services in their community.

Identify the Good!

Identify the oops/ouch moments!!

What can we work to reframe?

The logo for TRUE COLORS UNITED. features the text in a bold, sans-serif font. The words 'TRUE', 'COLORS', and 'UNITED.' are stacked vertically. The text is contained within a white rectangular box with a slight drop shadow, which is positioned over a series of horizontal white lines of varying lengths that create a layered effect.

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Youth Collaboration Concepts



- Identify Barriers
- Building Trust
- Establish Meaningful Engagement

Meaningful Collaboration

- Reduces power imbalances and the impact on young people.
- Creates spaces where young people feel safe to make important decisions.
- Create systems that honor the decision making power of youth and young adults and show youth that their decisions create results.

****Create safety by differentiating between a young person's role as a participant vs. as a collaborator.*



Youth Collaboration Principles

- **Set leaders up for success.** Before asking YYA for their expertise, ensure they have the necessary tools and support to participate throughout the process.
- **Reduce barriers to participation.** Provide various channels for YYA leaders to offer their input and feedback. Be sure to address barriers to receiving feedback on your programs and services.
- **Set clear and realistic deadlines.** Be mindful that YYA have personal lives outside of this work and they may have other commitments and priorities.
- **Highlight the impact of their work.** Give clear examples of how youth input was influential in final decisions, products, and services.



Youth and Broader Equity

- *Authentic collaboration with young people requires a commitment to understanding how identity shapes experiences.*
- *Young people come into this space with various and multiple identities which need to be acknowledged, accepted, and understood before authentic collaboration can truly take place.*
- *It is **important** to understand how racism and oppression has impacted your community.*



Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration

Building Trust

Establishing and building trust is essential in any effective relationship. Once positive rapport is established, genuine collaboration can begin.

- *Learn about YYA motivations and inspiration for doing this work*
- *Be authentic in your engagements with YYA*
- *Be honest and open with your engagement*



Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration

Meaningful Engagement

Make sure that you meaningfully engage youth at every level of your work. “Showy engagement” or tokenism is an issue that often gets in the way of effective collaboration between YYA and older adult partners.

- *This includes meetings, discussions, activities, and programs*

Avoiding Barriers to Authentic Youth Collaboration:

Collaboration:

Leadership Development

Young adults should have the freedom and agency to be the leaders of their own lives. Their autonomy should be promoted as they make decisions about the issues that impact their lives.

- *Mentoring support*
- *Professional development support*
- *Life goals coaching support*



A common question

What kind of support do YYA need in this work?



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Authentic Youth Collaboration & Adulthood

Supporting YYA

What kind of support do YYA need locally in this work?

What commitments can you make as an Older Adult Partner in providing supports for YYA?

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What do YYA need?

- **Authentic Partnerships**
 - *Undoing Adultism*
 - *Equitable Relationships*
 - *Power Sharing*
- **Tools and Training**
 - *Soft and Hard Skills*
 - *Professional Development/Investment*
 - *Mentoring and Coaching Support*
- **Clarity of Roles/Responsibilities**
 - *Explanations*
 - *Guidance*
 - *Descriptions*
- **Understanding of the Work**
 - *Knowing what they are walking into*
 - *Local Landscape*
 - *Systems Knowledge*

Support for YYA

1. Set youth and young adult leaders up for success.
Set youth and young adult leaders up for success by:

2. Creating **collaborative environments** for input and feedback
 - Set deadlines
 - **Provide guidance** of task and activities
3. **Uplift the impact of their work** and accomplishments
 - Provide **supportive accommodations**
4. Uplift their **professional development** and training



Authentic Partnerships



Meaningful Partnerships

1. Be intentional about the decision-making power that youth have in your work.
2. Believe that YYA are the experts of their own truth.
3. Compensate YYA for their time just like any other team member.
4. Listen to YYA and build a reciprocal relationship where you honor their experiences and allow their experiences and ideas to inform your YHDP activities and processes.



Equity in Decision Making

It's up to the older adults working with YYA to be intentional, communicative, and aware as partnerships are formed.

Authentic youth collaboration is about more than inviting a young person to share the stories of their past; it's also about **providing the space for them to share their vision for the future.**

Sustaining youth voices require substantial support from older adult partners



Resources

- [TCU Youth Collaboration Toolkit](#)
- [TCU Racial Equity Toolkit](#)
- [TCU Equity Hub](#)



**Any
questions?**



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