

Growing2gether and Transformative Psychology

Growing2gether and Positive Psychology

Growing2gether is underpinned by transpersonal psychology, which provides a holistic psychological approach focusing on enabling individuals to access more of their potential; on developing self-awareness and personal responsibility and on recognising the importance of meaning as requirements for wellbeing and positive engagement with society. Combined, we find a congruent pedagogy with transpersonal psychology and positive psychology, a branch of mainstream psychology, which was founded 1998 by Seligman (Seligman 1998). Positive psychology has added scientific rigour and has become more established over the past decade. More recently, a systematic review concluded that interventions using Positive Psychology led to reductions in mental health symptoms, as well as increases in wellbeing... These interventions are extremely useful and popular, considering their large-scale development and low cost. Growing2gether focus on bringing out the unique potential of young people, rather than seeing them as a 'problem', empowering them with life skills, work experience and a deeper understanding of who they are.

Moreover, through mentoring and being a role model for a small child in need of additional support, multiple levels of engagement are fostered all of which increase a young person's sense of connectedness; fosters a sense of meaning and purpose; increased engagement with their local community through having a responsible role to fulfil and an experience of their potential – of what they are capable of. A strong outcome of this way of working is an awareness of our fundamental interconnectedness evoking a sense of belonging and that who they are and what they do matters.

What's unique about a transformative or potential orientated approach?

- It is a consciousness changing approach rather than a behaviour modification one.
- It works to enable young people to grow and evolve rather than control their behaviour, so that they are empowered to make choices that are constructive and to their own benefit.
- It perceives each young person in their totality as a highly unique individual, with many latent gifts, qualities, character traits and potentialities.
- It promotes an exploration of values, which supports young people finding their own values, potential and place in the world.
- It recognizes the need of all young people for meaning and purpose in their lives.
- It provides young people with new and positive experiences of themselves which build self-esteem and aspiration.
- It develops emotional intelligence particularly in the areas of self-awareness and self-management.

- It encourages educational attainment through building awareness of life goals and the choices and actions needed to make those goals real.
- It builds a sense of community and an appreciation and respect for difference and diversity.

Principles of transformative youth work:

- Trusting young people rather than controlling them: if armed with a realistic knowledge of outcomes and consequences, young people will most often make the best decision for their wellbeing.
- Respecting rather than judging: To have compassion for the suffering of a young person's background, to understand that they may have lacked any positive role models, to have empathy for their need of recognition, to know that their negative behaviour is often a cry for help – is to give a gift that can plant the seeds of self empathy.
- Relating to potential, rather than behaviour: this work embraces both the behaviour of a young person as well as their potential. For a significant other to see our potential and believe in us, enables us to find self-belief and a sense of identity.
- Understanding that young people are values driven: implicit in and behind both positive and negative behaviour, lies a value that is underpinning it.
- Providing young people with a new and positive experience of themselves, leads to increased mental health, connectedness and self-empathy: Young people are relational beings and learn best through each other and through affirmation of their inherent strengths and character traits.

Giving young people a new and positive experience of themselves builds new neural pathways to replace existing negative ones. To again and again experience that they have something to contribute to the world, that they can make a difference, that they can do a splendid job and that they fundamentally are a good person, builds self- esteem and self-belief.