

# Well-being, resilience and happiness

What can Youth Work do?

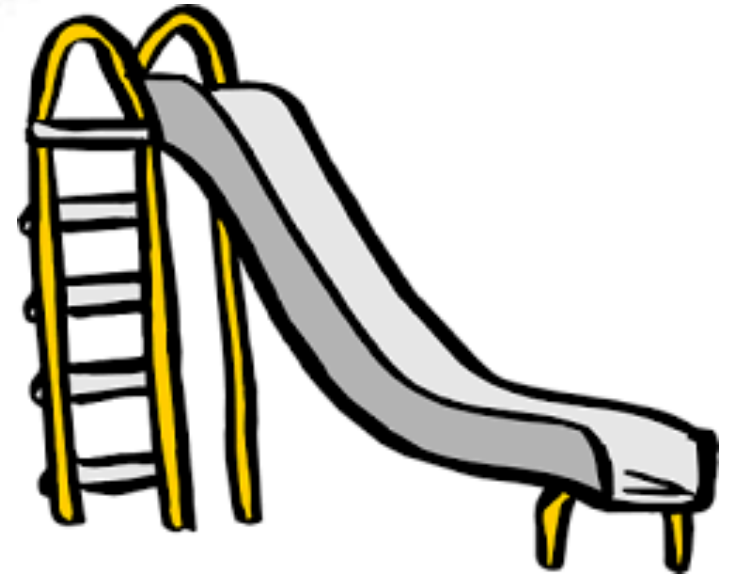
# Content

- Youth Work
- Well-being
- Resilience
- Happiness





**A few slides  
on Happiness**



# Good News!

- The majority of young people are well
- The majority of young people are not under stress
- Many young people are happy
- Many young people have supportive families or carers
- Many young people achieve their potential
- Many young people show compassion

# Happy people are

- More confident
- More energetic
- More productive
- More creative
- More helpful
- More forgiving
- More popular
- More kind to others

# The Purpose of Youth Work in the UK

‘Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential’

(Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2012: 4)

# Youth Work in Wales

- The voluntary involvement by young people who have chosen to engage in the process
- Being age specific, focused on 11-25 year olds
- A non-formal education approach
- Being driven by a young-people-first approach
- A universal approach

(WAG, 2007: 7)



# Youth Work and Well-being

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child highlighted the importance of the concept of child well-being, repeating the vision of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.. ‘considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society’ (United Nations, 1989).
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WG, 2015) promises long term thinking, integration, engagement, collaboration, preventative action. All things that excellent youth workers do.

# Well-being or ill-being?

However a UNICEF report in 2007 placed the UK at the bottom of the league table for child well-being across 21 industrialised nations and that whilst economic output has nearly doubled in the last 30 years, life satisfaction levels in the UK have remained steady (UNICEF, 2007).

The UK spends more on children than most member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), at just over £90,000 per child from birth up to the age of 18, compared to an OECD average of just under £80,000 (OECD, 2009).

# The state of some of our young people

There appears as with other aspects of the lives of young people to be a propensity to portray young people as being deficient in various aspects of their lives. Evidence from the OECD shows that drunkenness is the highest in the OECD, with one in three 13 to 15 year olds having been drunk at least twice. The UK also reports the fourth highest teen pregnancy rate after Mexico, Turkey and the United States.

# Subjective Well-being

- The field of subjective well-being (SWB) is primarily concerned with people's evaluation of their lives; however, it includes a wide range of concepts, from momentary moods to global life satisfaction judgments.
- Fundamentally, SWB is how people think and feel about our lives.

# Constructionist view of resilience

Resilience is –

The outcome of negotiation between individuals and their environments to maintain self-definition as healthy ... [and] resilience is successful negotiation by individuals for health resources, with success depending for its definition on the reciprocity individuals experience between themselves and the social constructions of well-being that shape their interpretations of their health status (Ungar, 2004: 352).

Reflecting the predominant culture, resilience is:

Both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources...and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in a culturally meaningful way (Ungar, 2008).

# Resilience

A risk and resilience model can provide a solid foundation for considering the emotional well-being of the whole community by harnessing the everyday magic of ordinary human resources in the minds, brains and bodies of children, in their families and relationships and in their communities (Daniel and Wassell, 2002).

It has long been recognised that some young people develop well despite growing up in environments which are far from ideal. This capacity to cope with adversity, and even be strengthened by it, is at the heart of resilience.

# Pathways to Resilience

One of the major findings from PTR is that **positive service user experiences facilitate resilience processes, which in turn leads to functional outcomes for young people** (Ungar, Liebenberg, Armstrong, Dudding, and Van de Vijver, 2013).

*This means that when young people have a positive experience with a service, they feel valued, listened to, they have decision making power over what happens to them, they are more likely to have resilience processes (for example, a strong belief system, be connected to their environment or community, have friendships with supportive peers, and have coping and social skills).*

Once these processes have been supported and developed, young people do well, doing well is different depending on the culture and context.



# Happiness

- Despite massive economic growth, people are no happier now than during the 1950's
- It is estimated that in Wales mental health problems affect a quarter of adults and 1 in 10 children.
- The Welsh Government's mental health strategy, *Together for mental health* (Welsh Government, 2013), intends to promote mental wellbeing and where possible prevent mental health problems developing.
- For every happy friend in your social network, your own chance of being happy rises by 9%
- Our happiness can contribute to the happiness of others, happiness has three degrees of freedom

# Some more statistics

- A 68% increase in young people admitted for self-harm
- Young people's life satisfaction increased comparatively between 2007 and 2013, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> (UNICEF)
- Referrals to CAMHS doubled in 4 years
- 75% of incidence of long term mental health problems begin by age 18

# Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- Core requirements of the Act
  - Building happier young people will contribute to:
    - A resilient Wales
    - A healthier Wales
    - A more equal Wales
    - A Wales of cohesive communities

# What is Happiness

- To say that a person is happy means – roughly – that (s)he takes on balance more attitudinal pleasure than displeasure in things (Feldman, 2010)
- To what extent can the youth work experience enable young people to both enjoy and achieve?
- Strong evidence that both negative and positive emotions of staff impact on young people's happiness.

# Elements of subjective well-being

## 1. **Happiness:**

- an emotional state.
- how you feel about yourself and the world.

## 2. **Satisfaction with Life:**

- more global judgment about your acceptance with your life.
- more of a cognitive assessment.

# Youth Work can

- Help young people to become:
  - Better able to understand and manage their emotions
  - More hopeful and optimistic
  - Stronger and more resilient
  - Happier
  - Less impulsive (Frude, 2016)

# Five Ways to Wellbeing



# Resilience beliefs

Four resilience beliefs will open up young people to the kind of positive outlook that enables them to navigate their way to happiness.

- Even though life may become worse tomorrow, I will carry on
- We should be responsible for family members
- I might one day be unfortunate, I may become ill or live in poverty but that doesn't frighten me
- I believe that as a person, one needs to abide by law

(Ungar et al, 2013)



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