

Strengths-Based Practice

(Based on “Strengths-Based Models in Social Work” by McCashen & Wayne (2005))

What is a **Strength-Based Approach**?

- Builds youth on their strengths
- Sees youth as resourceful and resilient, even in difficult conditions
- Youth led and centered on future outcomes

CHANGE happens using positivity and allowing each participate to demonstrate how they handle their own:

- Attitudes about their dignity
- Capacities
- Rights
- Quirks
- Challenges

Principles of the Strength-Based Approach

There are 9 guiding principles that serve as the foundation of the strength-based approach.

1. Everyone possesses a uniqueness that helps him or her evolve and move along his or her journey. These unique characteristics can be either:
 - a. Potential
 - b. Strengths
 - c. Capabilities
2. What receives attention or focus becomes what we (or the youths) strive(s) for and eventually becomes a reality.
3. Be careful with your words and language. Our language creates our (and our youth) reality.
4. Accept change, life and our world are ever-evolving; don't resist.
5. Support others as authentically as you can. You will see that your relationships are deeper and more meaningful.
6. The youth is the story-teller of their own story.
7. Build upon what you know and experience to dream of the future.
8. Capacity building has multiple facets and organization. Be flexible.
9. Be collaborative. Be adaptive and value differences (Hammond, 2010)

Using **Strength-Based Approach** in **Assessment**

Assessments often, naturally, focus on the problems, difficulties and challenges that participants are seeking support & services for. It is important to encourage and highlight participant's strengths in the process of assessment, to set the tone for ongoing services are focused on building on participants current interests, skills & supports.

Strengths that are **Often Overlooked**

- Youth is interested in our program and has motivation to go to school, work, learn new skills build a career, etc.
- Youth is talking a risk to share assessment information with a professional who they have a limited relationship with
- Youth have persevered to get to this point in their life
- Youth are resourceful and creative in making the most with limited resources
- Youth expressing caring feeling for family members and friends (even persons who we may believe to be safe)
- Youth ability to function effectively in stressful situations

Practice:

Share a situation with a youth that you are struggling with. What are the barriers they are experiencing?

What situations are interfering that are out of their control? How is their attitude affecting their ability to achieve their goals?

What is going well in their situation? What strengths does the participant possess? How can we build on those situations and strengths? What are you going to do differently in aiding them?