

# the DYE model

democratic  
youth  
engagement

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“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”

— Dr. Carl Rogers

**Youth are people**, and are entitled to having agency over their beliefs, feelings, bodies, relationships, words, and goals.

**Adults are adults**, and are to model healthy relationships, as well as healthy emotional states, for youth. Changes occurring in youth will likely depend on the quality of the relationships with, and the emotional regulation within, the adults in their lives.

**The Relationship** between the youth and the adult is paramount. Decisions regarding the engagement of youth are to be viewed through the lens of how it will impact this relationship. Healthy relationships put a premium on the emotional needs of others.

**Needs** are at the core of human behavior. Adult curiosity about the needs underneath the behavior of youth can increase the quality of the relationship. From adults, youth need nurturance, consistency, firm boundaries, and clear expectations. Youth also need adults who are fully present for them, and who delight in them.

**Receiving consent** from youth prior to taking actions toward them is essential to cultivating for them a sense of safety – it can also increase the youth’s sense of agency. Teaching and allowing youth to say “no” can be healing and empowering for them.

**Collaboration** is to be used between the youth and the adults in order to establish goals. If youth are encouraged to endeavor toward a goal *for them* and *for their betterment*, change in the youth is more likely, and the change is likely to be more substantial. Intentions and actions designed to fix the youth are to be avoided.

**Activating youth** can occur once the relationship with the adult is established. If the youth has a sense that the adult’s intent aligns with the goals of the youth, they are more likely to be receptive and responsive to the guidance from the adult.

**Play** is how youth enter the world. Allow space for exploration, self-direction, risk-taking, mistake-making, mending, humor, and imagination.

**The Dance**, the push-pull, the back-and-forth, the falling-down and getting back-up, this is the life with youth. Leaning-into chaos, rolling with resistance, with some grit and some tenderness, can lead to healing, as well as some fun, for both the adults and the youth.