

Resources to Support You in Creating Safe Spaces

Language Matters, created by the Canadian Public Health Association, provides guidance on using respectful language in relation to sexual health, substance use, sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections and intersecting sources of stigma.

<https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/stbbi/language-tool-e.pdf>

Mental Wellness Card, provides contact information for services that provide free, anonymous mental health supports to youth.

<https://skprevention.ca/resource-catalogue/alcohol/mental-wellness-card/>

Trauma Informed Youth Engagement Information Card, provides information for youth service providers and organizations to support youth who may have been impacted by trauma.

<https://skprevention.ca/resource-catalogue/alcohol/trauma-informed-youth-engagement/>

Child Protection and Duty to Report, provides information from the Government of Saskatchewan on reporting abuse, neglect, and interpersonal violence.

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/child-protection/child-abuse-and-neglect>

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Saskatchewan Health Line: 811

Contact the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute for information about taking our youth engagement toolkit training.

saskatchewan
preventioninstitute
our goal is **healthy** children

1319 Colony Street, Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1
Resource 3-024 03/2024



Bus. 306-651-4300 skprevention.ca
© Copyright 2024 Saskatchewan Prevention Institute



CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Practical tips to ensure the youth that you work with feel valued, heard, and respected.

Creating safe spaces is important for the promotion of youth well-being, safety, and empowerment. Safe spaces provide a sense of belonging and create a nonjudgmental environment free of harassment or discrimination. There are many ways to foster a safe environment for the youth you work with.

The acronym 'S. A. F. E. S. P. A. C. E.' can help you to remember what you can do to ensure that young people feel valued, heard, and respected.

Set clear guidelines: Together with youth, work to create a clear set of guidelines that highlight the importance of a safe space for everyone. As you move forward, you and the group may review and adapt these guidelines as needed.

Amplify marginalized voices: Youth who belong to disadvantaged groups can face discrimination that limits their participation in discussions. Ensure that you provide everyone with equal opportunities to share their personal experiences, if they wish to do so. Create space for discussions that explore the unique experiences of marginalized youth.

Foster inclusivity: Consider the diversity of your youth group. When speaking to the group, use words that do not reinforce stereotypes or cause stigma and marginalize individuals. Remember not to make assumptions about someone's identity – ask for youth's preferred pronouns when addressing them.

Engage youth's cultures in programming: Cultural engagement can foster a sense of belonging within the group. You may find it helpful to engage community leaders and organizations to provide their guidance on certain topics. Remember, while you may be knowledgeable on cultural topics, you are not the expert on someone else's culture. Always provide people with an opportunity to speak to their own cultures.

Share decision making: Create a culture of participation and collaboration within your youth group. Ensure that youth feel that their input and feedback is valued and appreciated. Collaborate on choosing topics of interest for discussion.

Promote active listening: Youth are the experts on their own experiences. Ask questions and, whenever possible, use examples mentioned by youth to demonstrate active listening.

Appreciate youth's strength and resilience: While some youth in your group may have experienced marginalization in their life, it is important to highlight their skills and strengths. Using a strength-based approach, you can support youth's resilience in addressing and overcoming the challenges in their lives.

Connect individuals to external resources as necessary: Some activities or topics may be triggering to some youth. Be ready to refer and connect any youth in your group with available community supports if they experience distress. *If you suspect that a youth in your group under the age of 18 has and/or is experiencing any form of abuse, [The Child and Family Services Act](#) states that it is every person's duty to report the suspicions to a child protection worker.*

Empower choice: When discussing potentially triggering topics, remind youth that their participation is not mandatory. Promote youth's autonomy by offering them examples of alternative activities to engage in while they sit out of the exercise or discussion or support them to develop their own alternative activity.

Remember that fostering safe spaces is an ongoing process that requires openness, communication, continuous learning, and willingness to adapt.