

Center for Innovative Practices

Resiliency Tool Kit: Resource #5

Validation and Valuing: Supporting Youth, Young Adult, and Family Voice

Validation and Valuing Definition: (Youth, young adults, and family members of Resiliency Ohio): A resilience-oriented mental health system is affirming of youth, young adults, and family members with unconditional acceptance. Supportive, emotionally safe environments are created, where youth and families can share their vulnerabilities and weaknesses safely and without judgment. Validation is a shared experience in which each provider journeys to discover and appreciate the youth and family's culture, circumstances, and life realities. The youth and family are validated for their courage, efforts, and persistence, knowing that progress is sometimes very difficult, and that "hanging in there" is sometimes all that is possible at any given point in a family's life. Youth with mental health disabilities and their families are doing the best they can, not only maintaining, but "surviving well."

Validation and Valuing Resource Tool #1 Resiliency-oriented engagement self-check

1. Take an inventory of your current perspective of working with youth and young adults.
2. Now take a look at what youth and young adults tell us is helpful to them? (see list below)
 - **Earn** each youth and young adult's **respect**
 - **Honor** youth and young adult's voice and self-wisdom
 - **Validate the** youth/young adult for their courage, effort, and persistence
 - **Value, understand, and respect** each young adult's journey, beliefs, values, customs, languages, abilities, traditions, and life experiences
 - Be curious and inquisitive without judgment
 - Ask about youth's interests, beliefs, values, life experience
 - **Acknowledge** personal choice and young adult's need to find their own way (TIP)
 - **Active awareness and attention:** listening deeply
3. How is your perspective the same or different?
4. How could you incorporate their recommendations into your practice?

Validation and Valuing Resource Tool #2

Understanding engagement from a youth, young adult, and family perspective

- Think about youth, young adults, and families you have worked with that you experienced challenges to effectively engaging with them. Make a list of common reasons, from your perspective, why engagement was challenging.
- Now, make a second list of potential challenges to engaging in services from a youth and family perspective.
- How are the lists the same or different?
- Based on this exercise what are some ways you could change your approach or perspective about engaging with youth, young adults, and families?

Validation and Valuing Resource Tool #3

Potential challenges to service involvement from a youth and family's perspective

- **Service Choice:** Does the youth, young adult, and/or family member want this service at this time? Who wants the change? (The system, the family, or the youth/young adult?)
 - **Youth Example:** "I need a break from services. I need to try to do this on my own."
Validating Response: "It sounds like you have had a lot of services growing up and you are ready to try things on your own. What supports will you need to do this?"
- **Different Priorities:** Are there unmet basic needs that are a bigger priority to the youth and family than therapy?
 - **Young adult example:** I just need a place to live. I don't need therapy.
 - **Validating Response:** I understand that housing is so important. How can I help you with that? What have you explored so far?
- **Multiple Demands and Responsibilities:** Does the youth and family have multiple people telling them what to do? Are they balancing other demands and responsibilities that compete with time for services?
- **Loss of Hope and Service Burnout:** Are the youth and family burned out with services? How have services helped or not helped in the past? Is the service perceived as a burden or a support?
- **Reliance on non-system supports:** Youth and parents may traditionally rely on family, faith, and friends for support.
- **System Trust:** Have the youth and family had previous negative experiences with the system? Does the youth/young adult/family trust the system?
- **Service Access:** Does the youth/ young adult/family have access to the services we are offering? e.g. lack of transportation; no services delivered in the home and community
- **Service Credibility:** Does the youth/young adult/family believe that you can help them?

Validation and Valuing Resource Tool #4 Appreciative Inquiry

One approach that can be used to increase validation and valuing of youth and family voice is the **appreciative inquiry approach** developed by Dr. David Cooperrider. **Appreciative inquiry** utilizes a systematic discovery-based exploration process to identify and validate youth, young adult, and family strengths, success, and potentials.

Exercise: Think of a young adult or family you are currently working with whom you have experienced challenges in engaging with them. Look at the appreciative inquiry questions listed below and pick two or three questions that you think would be helpful in improving your engagement with them. How do you think the youth/family might respond?

Examples of appreciative inquiry questions that promote validation and valuing:

- What would you want someone on the outside to know so they could better understand how hard it is for you right now?
- What are some special qualities about you/your family that people don't always see?
- Tell me what things are like for you right now, so I can better understand.
- Tell me about some of the day-to-day challenges you face and how you deal with them.
- What do people say you are good at? What abilities are you most proud of?
- If there was one question that I did not ask that would help me understand you or your situation better what would it be?
- What would others say they appreciate most about you, and what you have been through?
- How have you managed so well given everything you have been through?
- You are an expert on yourself. What can you tell me that will help us develop solutions to the current problem?
- Thinking about what we have talked about today, what has been most helpful for you?

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