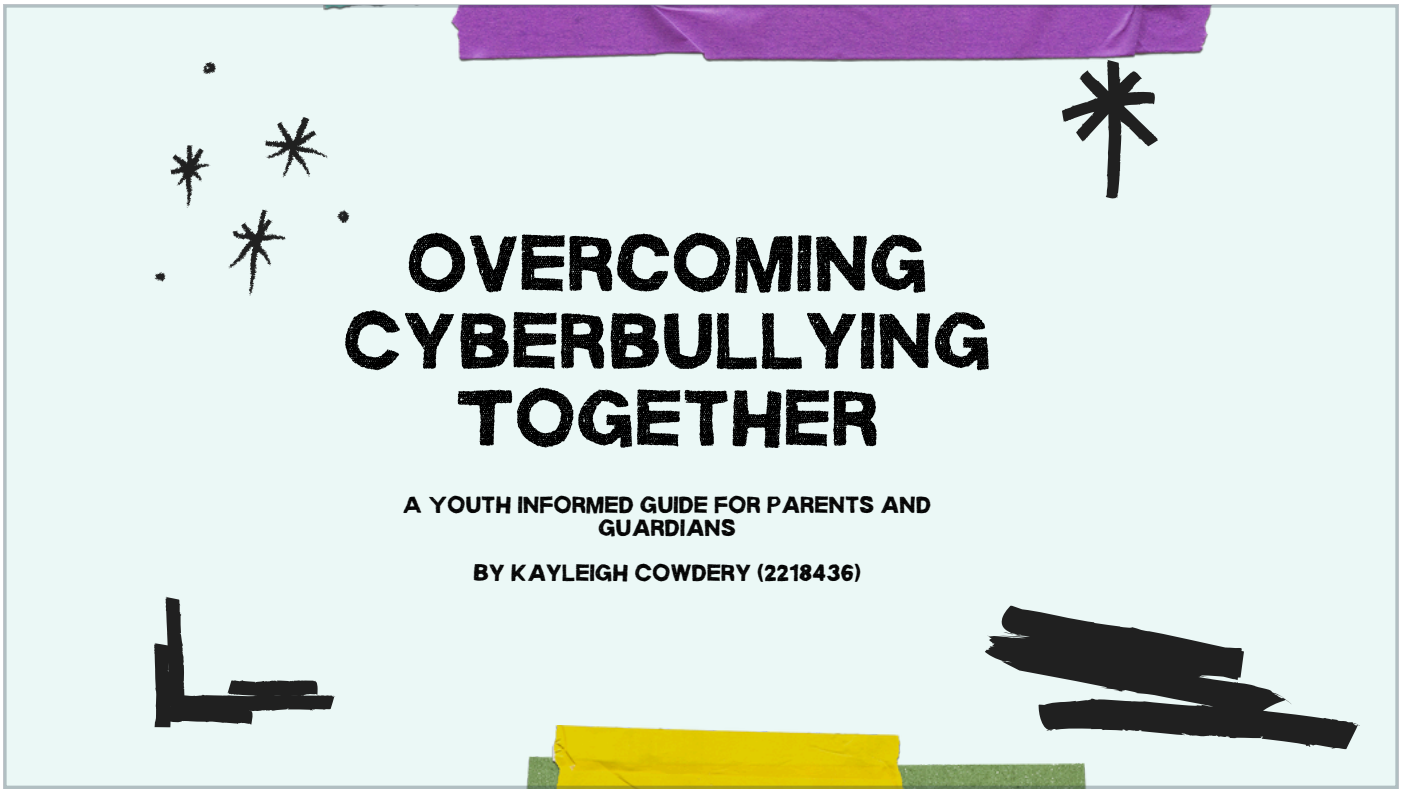

OVERCOMING CYBERBULLYING TOGETHER
A YOUTH INFORMED GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
BY KAYLEIGH COWDERY (2218436)

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Understanding Adolescence
- Importance of Connection before Correction (Siegel, 2014).
- Definitions of Cyberbullying
- Its forms and impact
- Recognising the Signs
- Well-being, including looking after ourselves.
- Youth Work
- Support and Resources

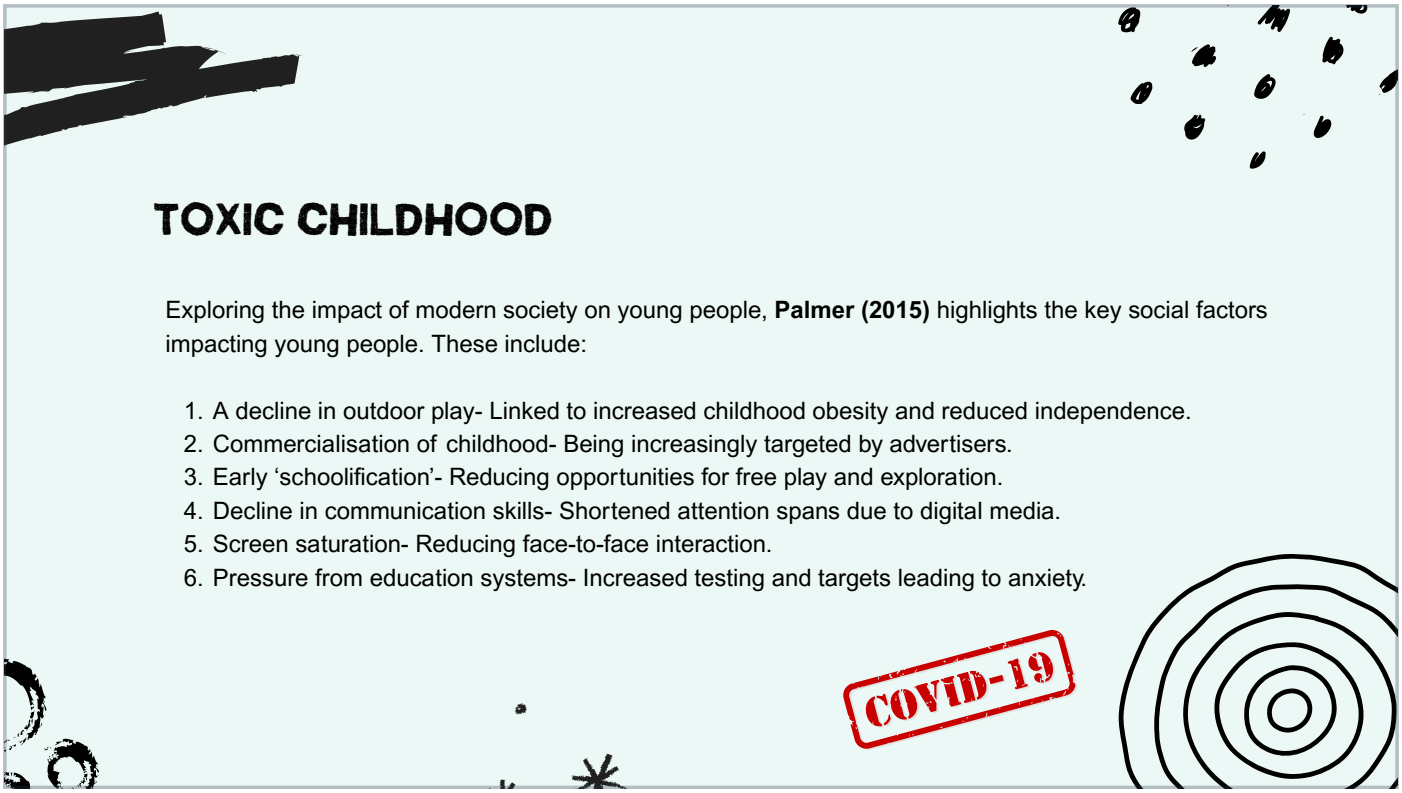






Icebreaker: What did you get up to when you were a teenager?

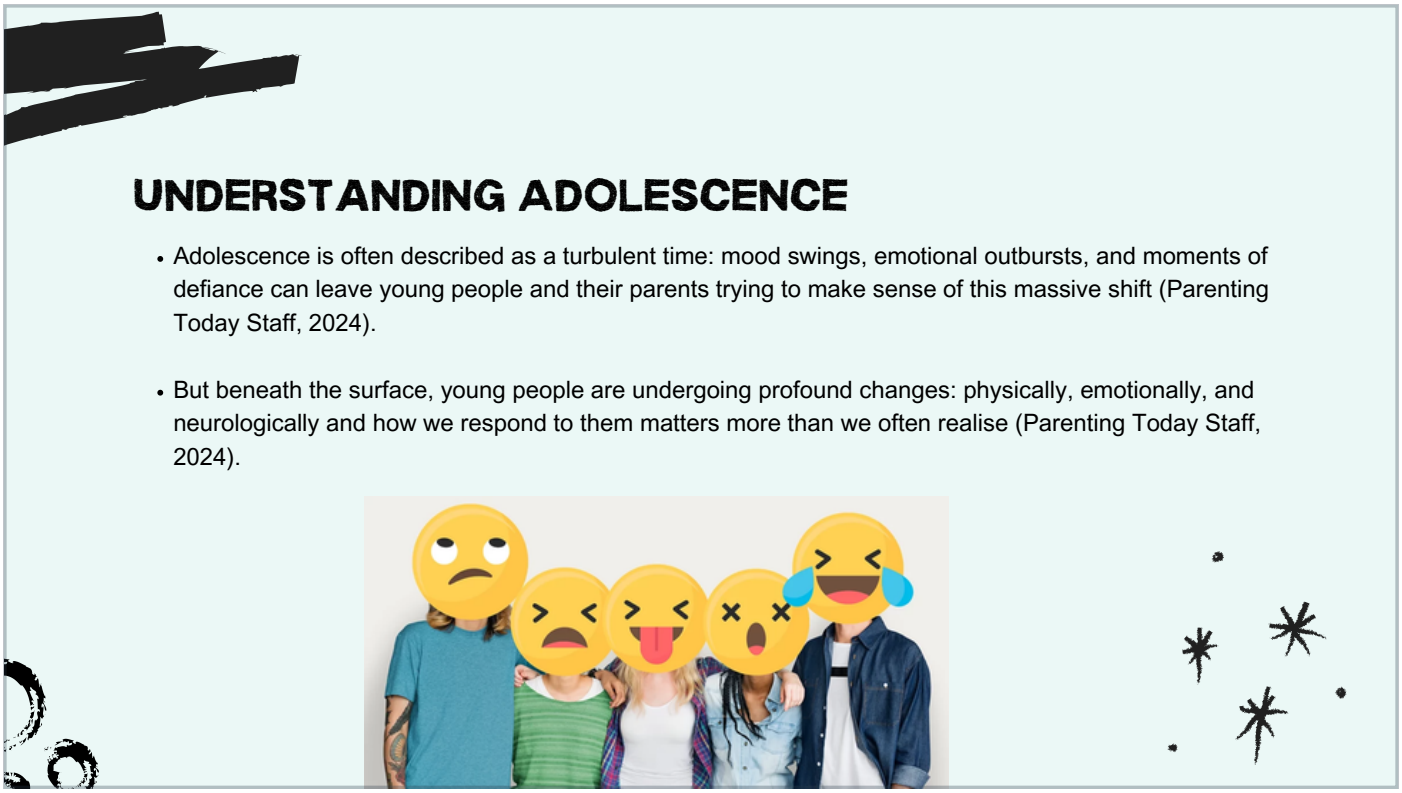
Used to set a reflective tone for the session encouraging parents to think about their own teenage years such as what it felt like, the experiences that shaped them, and the values they held. This activity also encourages empathy and understanding by comparing past and present challenges.



Leading on from the parents reflection, I feel it is important to share Palmer's (2015) key social factors (considered toxic) and still impacting young people today. These include:

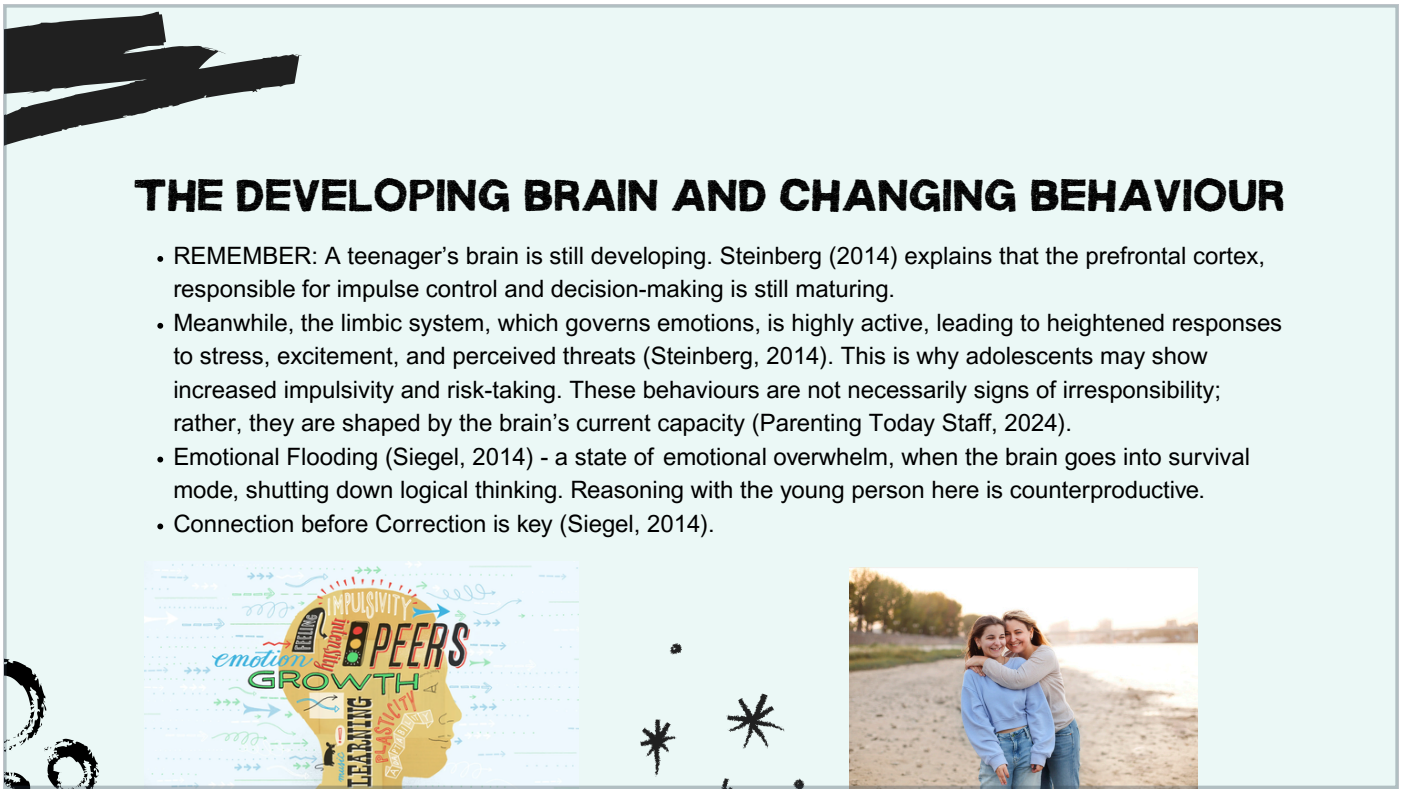
A decline in outdoor play- Linked to increased childhood obesity and reduced independence.
Commercialisation of childhood- Being increasingly targeted by advertisers.
Early 'schoolification'- Reducing opportunities for free play and exploration.
Decline in communication skills- Shortened attention spans due to digital media.
Screen saturation- Reducing face-to-face interaction.
Pressure from education systems- Increased testing and targets leading to anxiety.

COVID has heightened difficulties for young people and their families (PenYBont Health, 2021). Many are facing increased isolation stemming from lockdowns, mental health challenges, and family pressures, alongside greater exposure to online risks and limited opportunities for outdoor play and physical activity (PenYBont Health, 2021).



Adolescence is often described as a turbulent time: mood swings, emotional outbursts, and moments of defiance can leave young people and their parents trying to make sense of this massive shift (Parenting Today Staff, 2024).

But beneath the surface, young people are undergoing profound changes: physically, emotionally, and neurologically and how we respond to them matters more than we often realise (Parenting Today Staff, 2024).



One of the most important things to understand is that a teenager's brain is still developing. Steinberg (2014) explains that the prefrontal cortex, responsible for impulse control and decision-making, is still maturing.

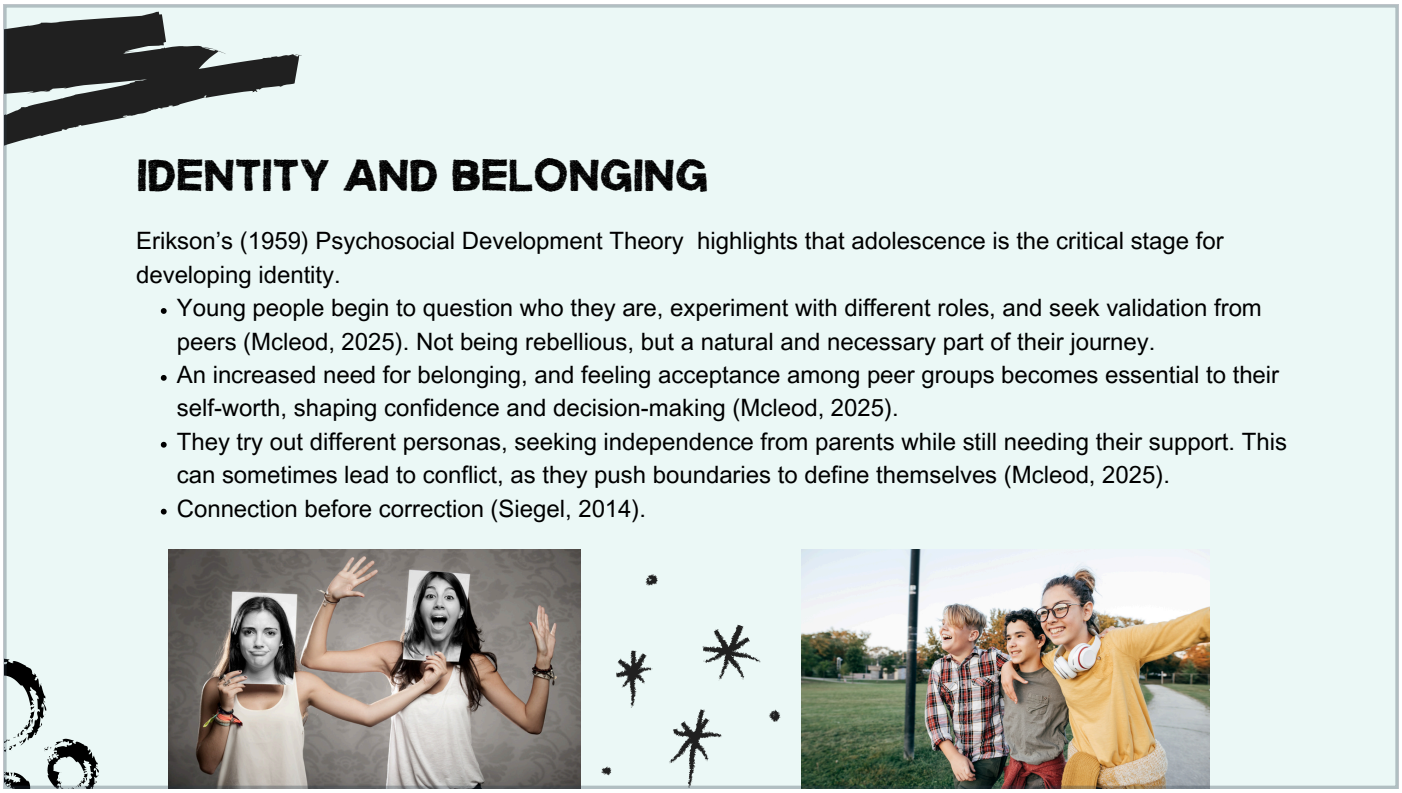
Meanwhile, the limbic system, which governs emotions, is highly active, leading to heightened responses to stress, excitement, and perceived threats (Steinberg, 2014).- impulsivity/ risk taking
This imbalance means young people are not always acting out of defiance or because they are being irresponsible (Parenting Today Staff, 2024).
It just means that they are responding based on what their brain is capable of in that particular moment (Parenting Today Staff, 2024).

Piaget's (1952) Cognitive development Theory suggests that even though adolescents have the ability to develop abstract thinking, this is near impossible in emotionally charged situations.

Referred to as flooding (Siegel, 2014), the brain goes into a state of overwhelm (survival mode) shutting down the ability to think logically (Siegel, 2014). Attempting to reason with a young person here is counterproductive.

Siegel (2014) argues that connection before correction is the key. When a teenager is overwhelmed, telling them they are wrong or trying to force rational discussion won't help.

In fact, it often escalates the distress. Instead, waiting until they are calm allows their thinking brain to come back online, making meaningful conversations possible (Siegel, 2014).



Psychologist Erikson (1959) identifies adolescence as a critical stage for developing identity.

It is a stage where young people begin to question who they are, explore different interests, and seek validation from peers (Erikson, 1959).

It is important to remember here that this is not them being rebellious, it is natural and necessary part of their journey to adulthood.

Belonging and Peer Influence: Adolescents experience a heightened need for belonging and feeling accepted by their peers becomes essential to their sense of self worth, often shaping their confidence and decision-making (Mcleod, 2025).

As caregivers, it is easy to feel pushed away, but they still need security and support from family.

They will try out different personas and interests, seeing what fits and what does not. (Mcleod, 2025). This process can sometimes lead to conflict, as they challenge boundaries in their search for independence (Mcleod, 2025),

But pushing limits is not about disrespect, it is their way of figuring out who they really are, their interests, goals and values (Mcleod, 2025).

Through empathy and connection, our job is not to control, but to guide. Young people need space to explore while knowing we are there (Mcleod, 2025).

Connection before correction (Siegel, 2014) means that when emotions run high, it is best to hold space and wait for calm.

Listening, validating feelings, and offering support will strengthen trust rather than create division (Siegel, 2014).



I recently engaged in an activity through Ascent Training with Holistic Steps (2025), and they introduced me to the Bean Bag Activity. I am not doing this activity today due to limited time, however I found this a really impactful activity for young people, parents, guardians, and professionals to illustrate the emotional challenges young people face and the importance of a strong support system.

How does it work?
Participants form two lines facing each other.

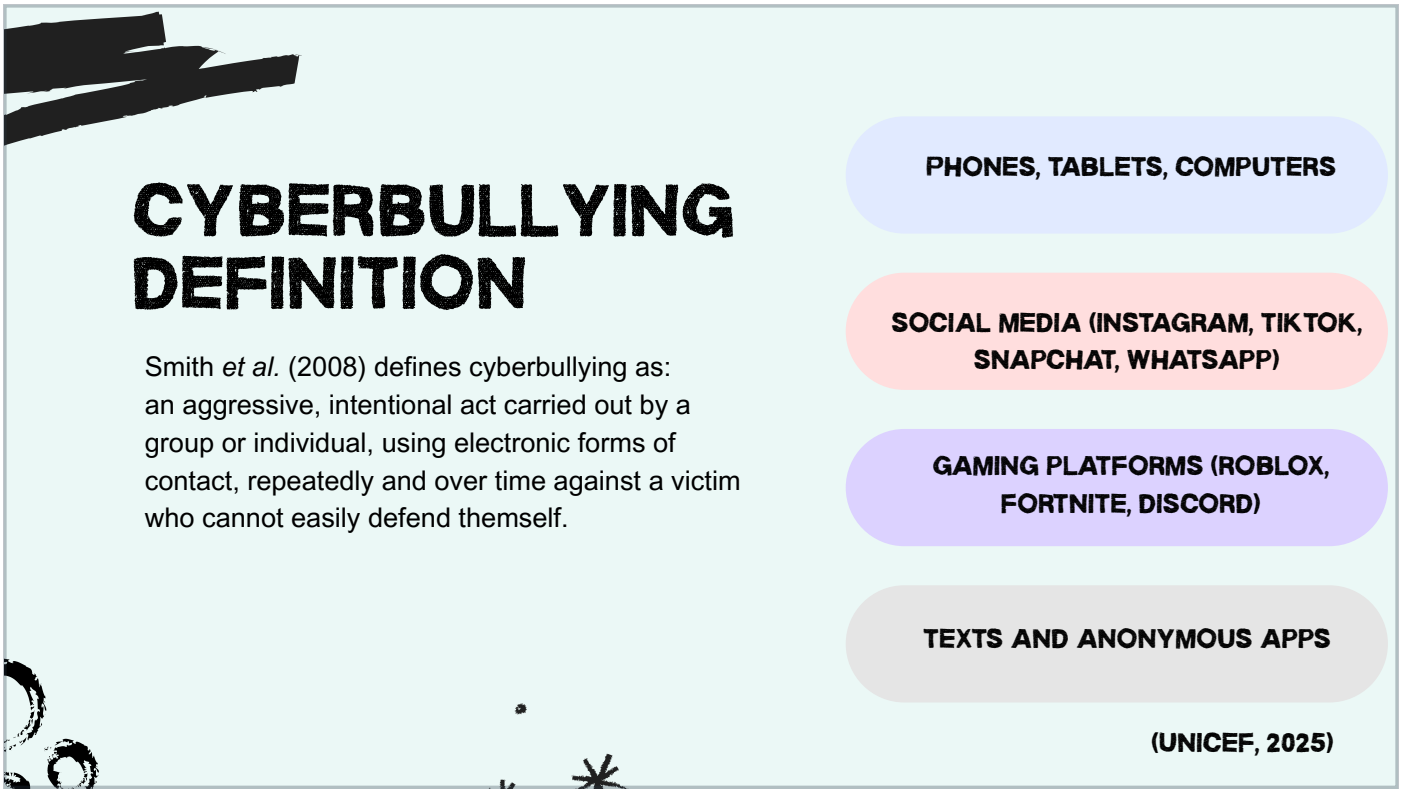
One line represents young people and wears beer goggle, symbolising how emotions can cloud their thinking.

The other line holds bean bags, representing different emotions. As real-life situations are described (e.g. attending a party or facing disappointment), emotions are called out and thrown to those with beer goggles on (representing young people). They struggle to catch them, showing how overwhelming emotions can be.

Eventually, some participants stand next to them, helping to catch the bean bags. This represents the role of parents, guardians, and trusted adults in providing support and scaffolding to young people.

This activity would help parents understand how young people can become easily flooded by their emotions. It is visual and engaging, and reinforces the importance of being supportive,

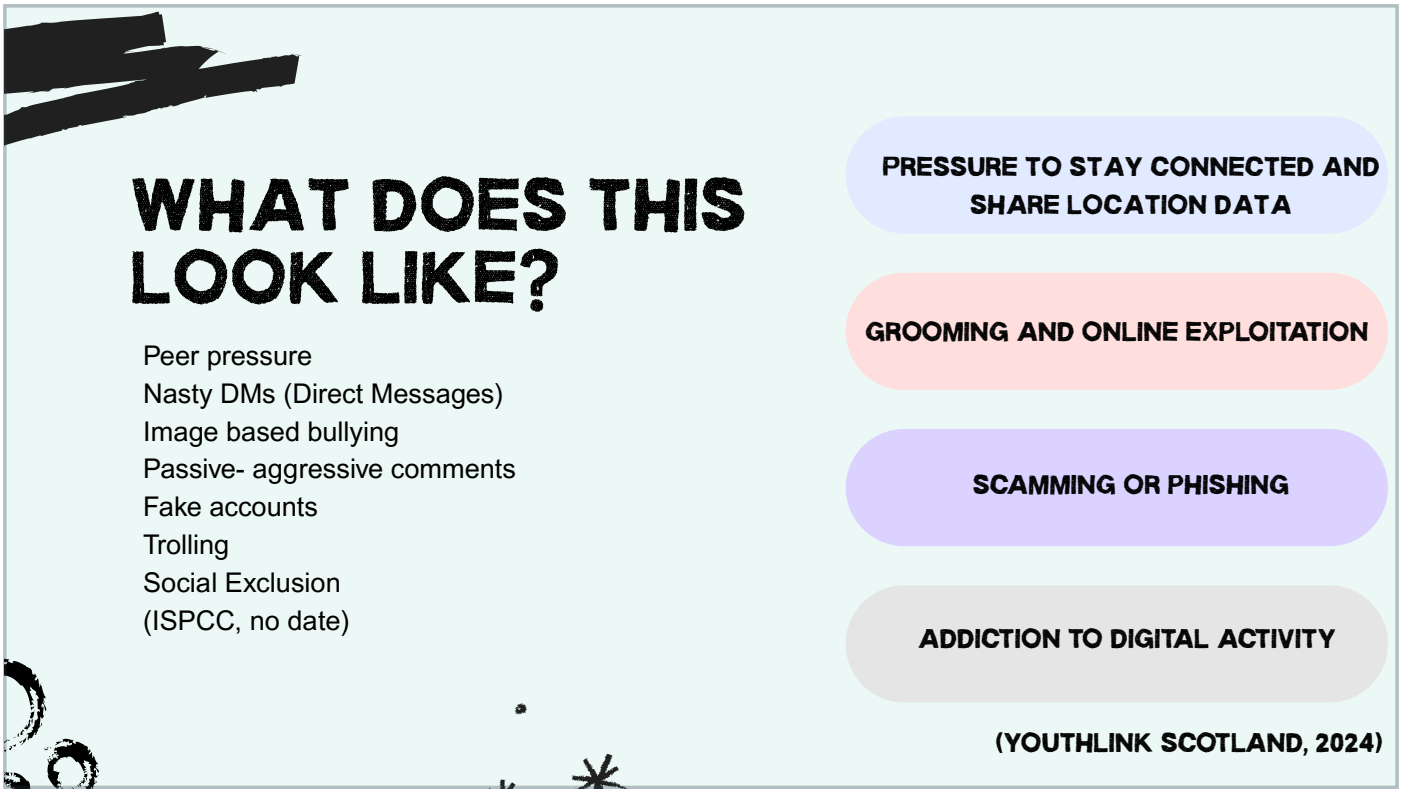
empathetic, and understanding.



Cyberbullying Definition

Smith et al. (2008) defines cyberbullying as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend themself.

Cyberbullying can occur through various digital channels, including phones, tablets, computers, and online platforms (UNICEF, 2025). It takes place on social media (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp), gaming platforms (Roblox, Fortnite, Discord), and through texts and anonymous apps (UNICEF, 2025).



What Does Cyberbullying Look Like?

Cyberbullying can take many forms, often designed to manipulate, humiliate, or isolate the victim. ISPCC (no dates) shares some common tactics:

Peer Pressure- Using a public online platform to coerce someone into participating in an activity (like an online challenge) they are uncomfortable with or pressuring them to reveal sensitive inform ation.
Nasty DMs- Since cyberbullies often hide behind anonymity, they may send cruel or hurtful private messages through Direct Messages (DMs), even when everything appears fine on a person's public social media profile.
Image-Based Bullying- Sharing embarrassing or compromising images, even if intended as a joke, can seriously damage a young person's self-esteem. Laws now exist to prevent this form of h arassment.
Passive-Aggressive Comments- Instead of directly targeting the victim, bullies make insinuating remarks in private group chats or public forums, subtly influencing others' opinions of the victim without confronting them outright.
Fake Accounts- Some cyberbullies create anonymous or fake profiles to spread false information or send harmful messages. Although these accounts can be blocked and reported, persistent bullies may continue to create new ones.
Trolling- This form of cyberbullying involves deliberate provocation on social media, where individuals instigate arguments or manipulate discussions to isolate and alienate their target. The goal is often to pressure the victim into leaving the platform altogether.

Social Exclusion- Cyberbullies may intentionally exclude someone from group chats, WhatsApp circles, or online communities. Even worse, they might create separate private groups solely to spread negative remarks about the victim. Posting group photos that deliberately exclude the victim to cause distress is another form of online exclusion.

A study by(YouthLink Scotland, 2024) discovered that there are various online safety and resilience issues impacting young individuals and their peers today. In addition to cyberbullying, these include feeling the pressure to stay connected online, grooming and online exploitation, scamming and phishing, and an addiction to digital activity, including social media and gaming.

THE BIGGER PICTURE: STATISTICS (ONS, 2024)

Cyberbullying is pervasive and deeply embedded in young people's digital experiences:

- 92.6% of children go online daily
- 58.1% spend three or more hours online on school days
- 35% accept friend requests from strangers
- 8.5% have publicly shared their location
- 19.1% have experienced cyberbullying in the past year.



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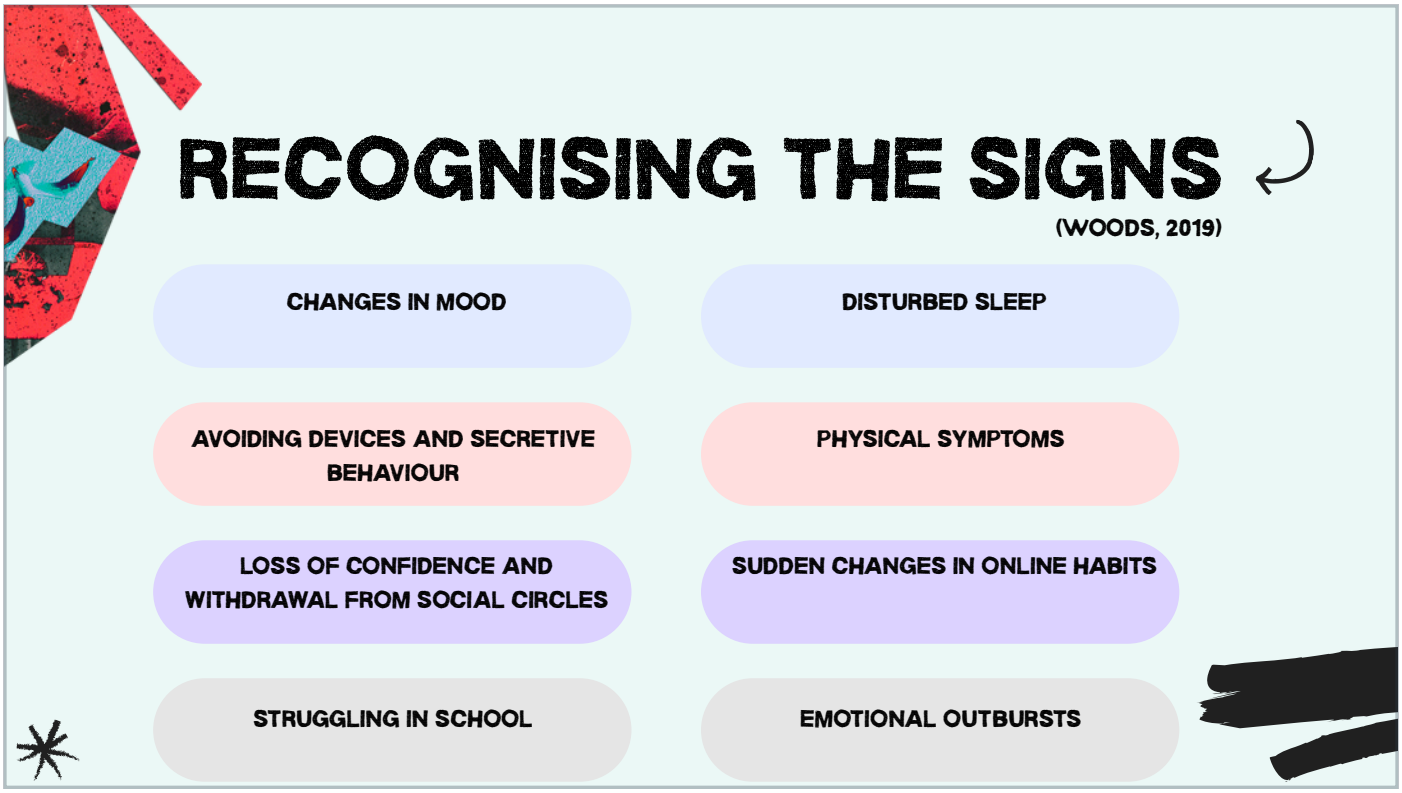
Effects on young people

Cyberbullying is a growing concern for children and teenagers, as they often struggle to express their distress and may avoid confiding in parents (Woods, 2019).

Unlike traditional bullying, online harassment can be relentless, making it difficult for young people to escape its impact (Woods, 2019).

Since cyberbullying predominantly impacts children and teenagers, it often goes unnoticed and dismissed as merely a natural part of growing up (Botaro, 2024).

If I had more time today I would show you this YouTube video where young people share their stories of bullying and cyberbullying. It is a really impactful video and showing it to parents would help them gain a deeper understanding of young people's lived realities cyberbullying and the impact cyberbullying has had on their lives.



Recognising the signs of cyberbullying

As parents, it is crucial to be aware of behavioural changes that may indicate cyberbullying (Woods, 2019).

If your child seems anxious, withdrawn, or irritable without an obvious reason, this could be a warning sign (Woods, 2019).

They may suddenly avoid using their phone or computer, become secretive about their online activity, or experience a noticeable drop in self-confidence (Woods, 2019).

Social and academic impact

You may notice that your child is withdrawing from friendships, struggling in school, or having trouble sleeping (Woods, 2019).

Cyberbullying does not just affect emotions, it can lead to physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches (Woods, 2019).

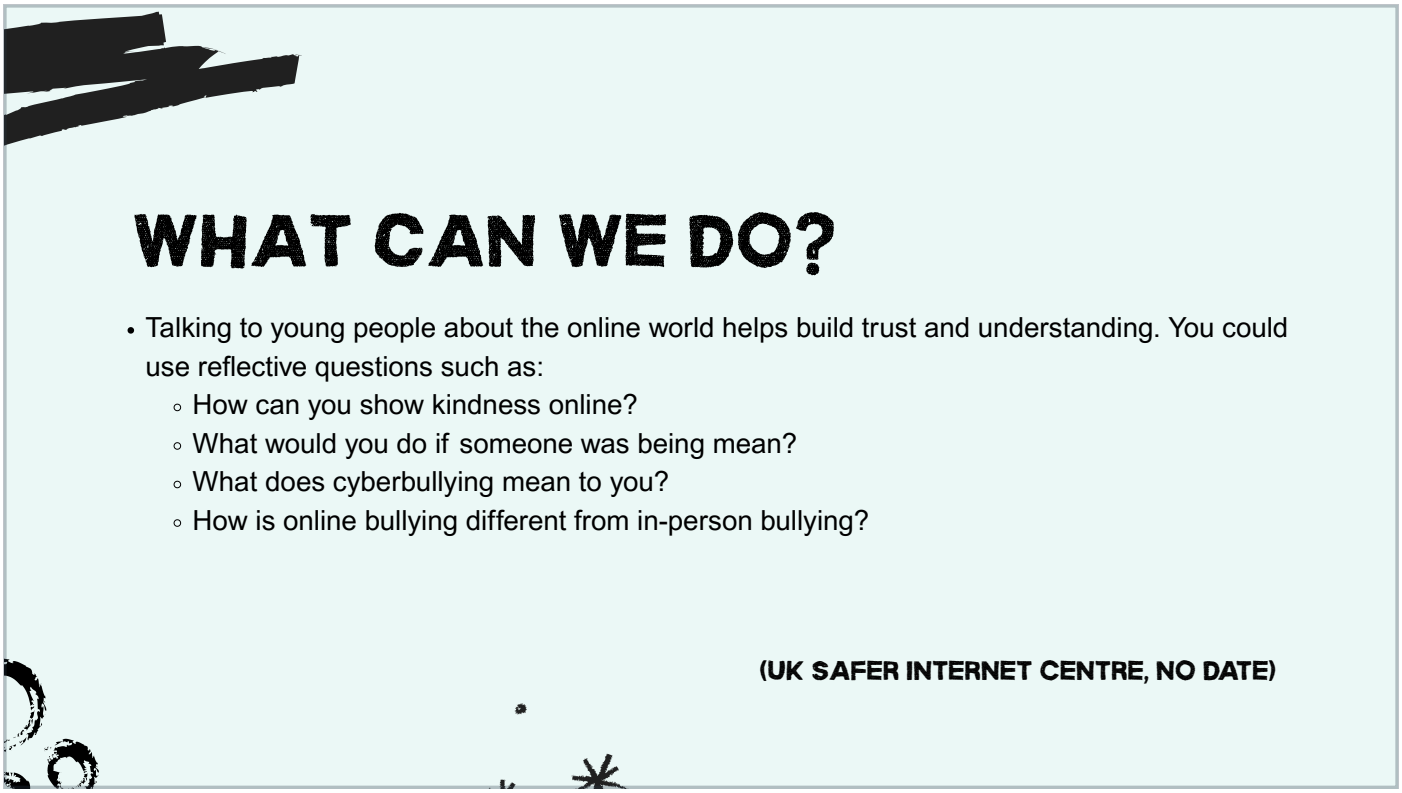
Some children react by deleting social media accounts or dramatically changing their online habits, while others lash out with frustration and emotional outbursts (Woods, 2019).

Cyberbullying is often overlooked because it primarily affects young people and can be dismissed

as part of growing up (Botaro, 2024).

However, if left unaddressed, it can have severe mental and emotional consequences (Botaro, 2024).

As a parent, carer or anyone engaged with young people, stepping in early, offering reassurance, and creating a supportive space for conversation can make a significant difference (Woods, 2019).



Talking to young people about the online world can help build trust and understanding. You could use reflective questions such as:

How can you show kindness online?
What would you do if someone was being mean?
What does cyberbullying mean to you?
How is online bullying different from in-person bullying?

These prompts can help parents consider whether their teen could also be a perpetrator of cyberbullying, whilst also reinforcing support, responsibility, and positive online engagement.

DEVELOPING EMPATHY

Helping children understand the impact of their online actions is key to building empathy. They may not always recognise bullying, mistaking it for harmless banter. Early conversations about acceptable behaviour can ensure they understand how their words can affect others.

(UK SAFER INTERNET CENTRE, NO DATE)

SUPPORTING A TEENAGER EXPERIENCING CYBERBULLYING

- Listen without interrupting
- Stay calm
- Reassure them about device access
- Discourage retaliation
- Keep records
- Inform their school/ college
- Contact the police if necessary

(UK SAFER INTERNET CENTRE, NO DATE)



CONNECT BEFORE CORRECT





Supporting Teenagers at Home

Foster Open Communication- Creating a safe and welcoming space encourages teenagers to express their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment.

Offer Emotional Support- Being present and understanding during moments of distress helps them feel valued and reassured.

Listen with Empathy- Active listening, without criticism, and validating their emotions ensures they feel heard and respected.

Promote Healthy Coping Strategies- Encouraging activities like exercise, mindfulness, and creative expression can help teenagers manage their emotions in positive ways.

Providing a nurturing environment strengthens their emotional well-being and can help them navigate challenges with confidence.



The Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are simple steps that can support both mental and physical health and can be easily incorporated into daily life (Change, Grow, Live, no date).

Connect- Spend time with loved ones or meet new people to build meaningful relationships (Change, Grow, Live, no date).

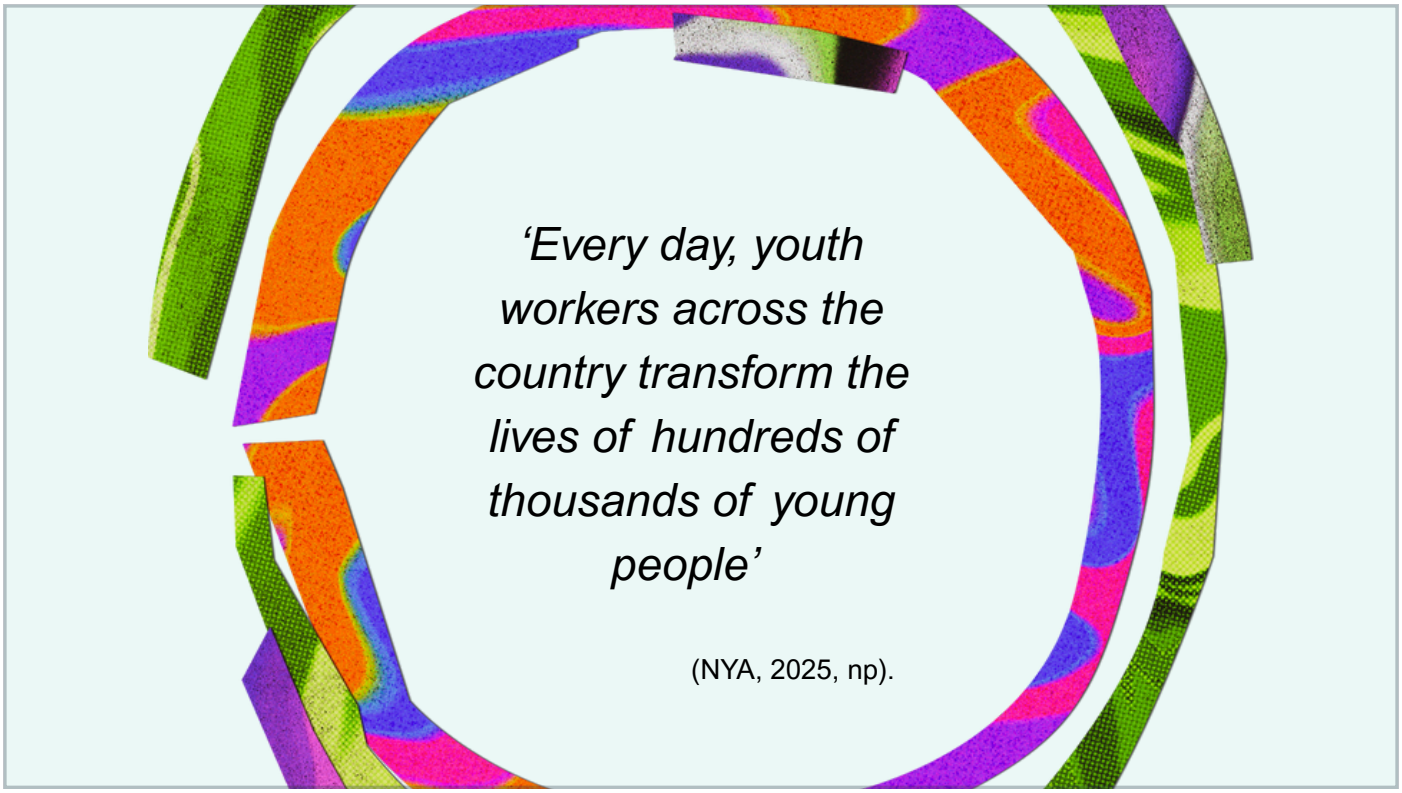
Be Active- Move in a way that feels good, whether it's dancing, walking, or playing sports (Change, Grow, Live, no date).

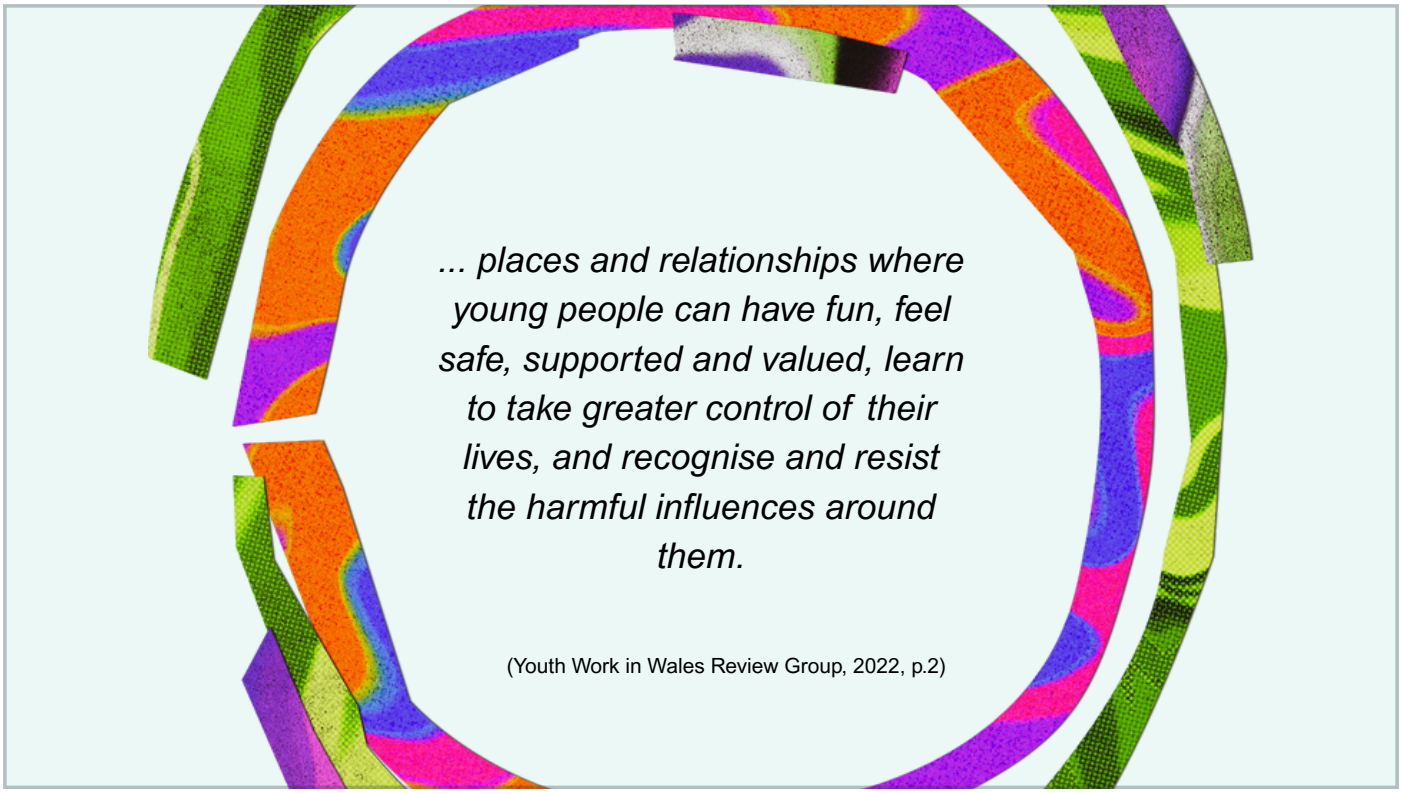
Keep Learning- Discover something new, like cooking, a craft, or a language, to boost confidence (Change, Grow, Live, no date).

Give- Acts of kindness, big or small, can bring joy; volunteer, help a friend, or simply smile at someone (Change, Grow, Live, no date).

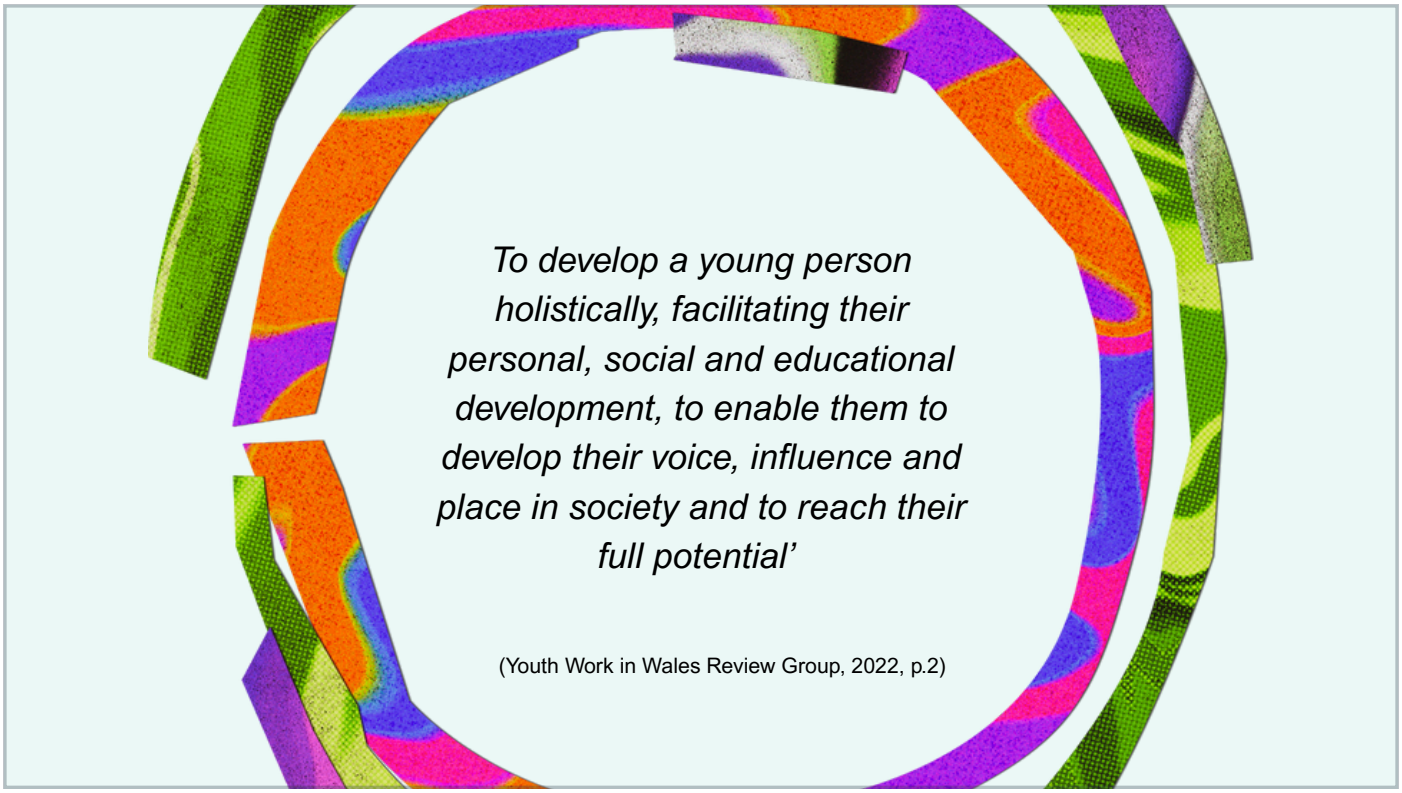
Be Mindful- Stay present and aware of your thoughts and surroundings to gain perspective (Change, Grow, Live, no date).


YOUTH WORK

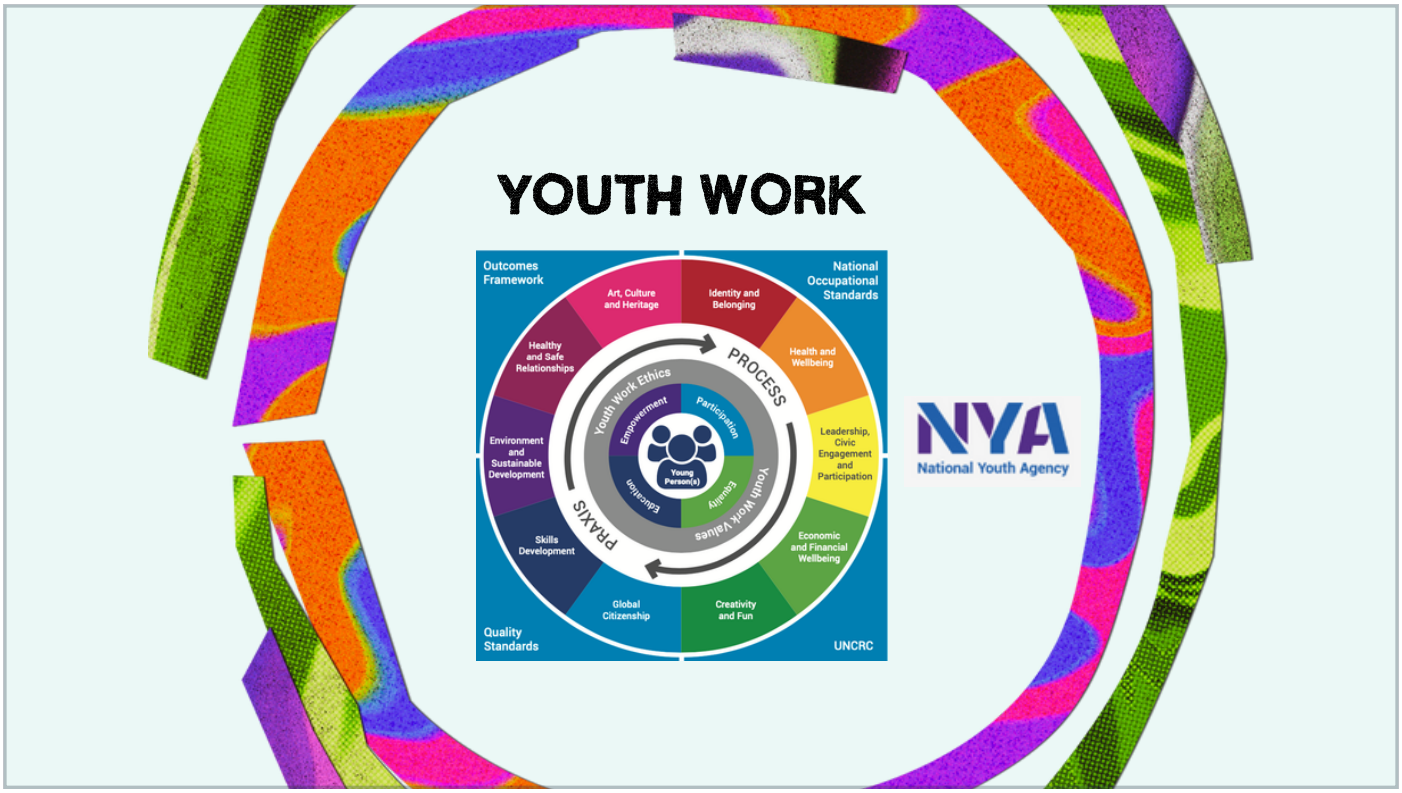

‘Every day, youth workers across the country transform the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people’
(NYA, 2025, np).



Youth Work provides 'places and relationships within which young people can enjoy themselves, feel secure, supported and valued, learn to take greater control of their lives, and recognise and resist the damaging influences which may affect them;' (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022, p.2).



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Youth work is built on inclusion, empowerment, and participation, ensuring young people are at the heart of everything we do (NYA, no date; CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). Praxis guides our approach, reflecting on theory and applying it to practice in a self-aware, ethical, and accountable way (Smith, 2009).

Understanding adolescent needs is key, particularly their need for safety, emotional connection, and support during transition (Maslow, 1943; Bowlby, 1958).

Commitment to Young People's Rights and Wellbeing

Our work is grounded in key frameworks that uphold young people's voices-
UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989)- Advocating for children's rights.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2015)- Ensuring sustainable support for young people.

National Youth Work Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019)- Strengthening the quality and sustainability of Youth Work practice.

Finally, by providing parents with the tools to support their teenagers, we reinforce Youth Work outcomes such as active participation, wider Skills development, and enhanced emotional competency (WAG, 2007)

In conclusion, Youth work is not just about supporting young people, it is also about working together with families, communities, and policymakers so all young people can experience meaningful, happy, and fulfilling lives.



Through informal and non-formal learning opportunities, youth work offers young people opportunities which are:

Educative-
Participative
Expressive-
Inclusive-
Empowering-

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES




THANK YOU!
Any Questions?
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF
WELLBEING

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