



BUILDING ALTRUISM THROUGH YOUTH WORK:

A rediscovered narrative in
building mental health
and well-being

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, YouthAction NI received funding through the Ideas Fund (British Science Association) to develop a new research and practice-based intervention in partnership with Queen's University Belfast (School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work). This initiative allowed us to pilot new approaches in supporting young people to build health and well-being through a more sociological and youth work lens. Part of this initiative involved testing peer research models with young people to ascertain habits, tools, techniques and outlooks to develop positive well-being with a particular focus on compassion, kindness and altruism.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental well-being does not have a single universal definition, but it does encompass factors such as:

- The sense of feeling good about ourselves and being able to function well individually or in relationships;
- The ability to deal with the ups and downs of life, such as coping with challenges and making the most of opportunities;
- The feeling of connection to our community and surroundings;
- Having control and freedom over our lives;
- Having a sense of purpose and feeling valued.

Of course, mental well-being does not mean being happy all the time, and it does not mean that you won't experience negative or painful emotions, such as grief, loss, or failure, which are a part of everyday life (Mental Health Foundation, 2021).

YOUTH WORK BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

YouthAction NI have been committed to improving the mental health and well-being of young people and their communities for 80 years.

In recent years, we have all witnessed a more concentrated focus on the mental health and well-being of young people. Within the youth work profession mental health and well-being has been a horizontal principle across everything we do and represent: improving the lives of young people has been at the fore. Supporting positive mental health and well-being: it's what youth work has always done!

Addressing mental health is more than developing a programme. Promoting positive mental health and well-being is based on the social and emotional space we create, the approach and relationships we have with young people, the peer relational learning

and support among young people themselves and most importantly, it is based on voluntary choice to participate by the young person.

Youth work practice works with young people as individuals, working with how they feel as well as what they know and what they can do. The practice also works through peer group networks and relationships which support young people to go beyond where they are starting; develop their potential; and to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them (Davies, B. 'What is Youth Work? UU Centre for Research and Dialogue, 2022).

Youth work takes place in both group and individual situations; it is connected to the local and wider community; and it champions youth participation, volunteering and citizenship. Youth work is relational and social; it supports connections, affinities and overall belonging. Young people have space and time and are listened to by their youth workers. Youth work and youth arts nurtures group team-building, activities and physical movement. It provides learning experiences and reflection on attitudinal and skills development. Youth work enables young people to have self-acceptance and to embrace diversities among others. These are all important factors when building mental health and well-being through youth work.

"It improves your mental health and the health of others."

(Corin Kelly Herron and Colt McCay)

SECTION 2

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN YOUTHACTION AND QUB

The partnership between YouthAction NI and Queen's University Belfast was established through the Ideas Project in November 2021 as part of an 18 month project funded through the Ideas Fund (British Science Association).

Queen's University Belfast provided critical support, feedback and guidance throughout this initiative including ethical guidelines, mental health and resilience measurement tools, peer research training, a summary report of key learning and a literature review aligned to altruism.

Building on our tested LIFEMAPS positive psychology through youth work portfolio we wanted to further explore techniques and tools being used in young people's everyday lives in a way that they can name as impacting positively on their well-being.

Our lens centred on Resilience (managing and navigating life's challenges and difficulties) and Positivity (reframing outlooks, seeing and seizing opportunities). It incorporated more sociological approaches and practices of altruism through youth work, especially in the aftermath of such a worldwide event as COVID-19.

Studies have demonstrated that even those who are struck by catastrophic events such as cancer, blindness or paralysis typically recover their normal or near normal level of day-to-day happiness after an appropriate adjustment period (Cutler, H., 1999). Psychologists refer to concepts of 'adaptation' and 'adjustment'. In reality, this requires training the mind, reframing outlooks and embodying an overall mental discipline. This should start as early as possible and remain purposeful and intentional for life. In 'The Art of Happiness' the Dalai Lama emphasises the need to identify and cultivate positive mental states as well as to identify and eliminate negative mental states (Cutler, H., 1999:143). The prime factor that allows us to deal effectively with difficult situations is the capacity to 'shift perspective' to view a situation from a different vantage point. This can mean developing new habits, exercising effort and remaining convicted and determined. It can be interpreted as having a 'growth mind-set' where we can rise in the face of relentless knock-backs and road-blocks. We learn to recover and see setbacks for what they are as we persevere and remain committed to trying and applying effort and practice as we keep our eyes on the prize (Britto, J. 2019)

'Achieving genuine happiness may require bringing about a transformation in your outlook; your way of thinking, and this is not a simple matter.'
(Howard Cutler, Dalai Lama, 1999:28).

The core elements of 'Orientation' (mind-set and outlook to goals and risk) alongside 'Inner strength' (having personal confidence and control) are embedded in most youth work approaches. It is important to recognise that there are varying approaches to improving mental health and well-being and no one-size fits all model can be applied. People at given times need approaches that support their outlooks, that reduce their anxieties, that reduces habits that breed negative self-image, that helps with their financial well-being and that support their sense of self-acceptance for example.

PROJECT APPROACH

The focus of this Ideas project was to build on previous work by YouthAction to assess and Developing Outlooks, Habits and Practices among young people that build happiness & well-being. Our goal was to both learn from young people about the techniques and tools they have used and to also introduce new possibilities.

Our area of enquiry set out to:

- capture examples of outlooks, techniques and tools to improve well-being among young people.
- uncover and showcase altruism and the seeds of compassion among young people.
- synthesise key messages to building happiness and well-being (an array of outlooks, techniques, practices).
- understand if there are variations among young women, young men, young people from rural communities, young people from BME communities etc.

How do we find this out?

- Young people (peer researchers) share their examples of outlooks, techniques and tools to improve well-being.
- Young people (peer researchers) share examples of their compassion and altruism in helping others.
- Peer researchers carry out a short questionnaire with others in the North West Regional College and among their friendship groups.
- The youth worker/teachers with the peer researchers maintain personal reflections on their observations and expressions among young people (active listening).

As part of the collaboration between YouthAction NI and Queen's University Belfast we agreed on resilience and well-being measures that would be utilised throughout our Ideas project. These measures were adapted from the Children and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-12) (Liedenberg, Ungar and Le Blanc, 2013).

The survey was completed by 229 young people; some who took part in the peer research training

focussing on mental health and well-being and through surveys with other young students across the college from across a range of disciplines. This piece of work took place in collaboration with North West Regional College whereby students completed a 12-16 week course exploring the following elements: youth participation, peer research, communication, emotions, research processes, research ethics, methods of data collection, action planning and collecting and analysing data.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The first part of our assessment was to ascertain how the peer researchers and other young people across the North West College of FE felt about their mental health and well-being.

229 young people aged 11-18 years completed the YouthAction survey on resilience (using the Children and Youth Resilience Measure: CYRM-12). 55% of respondents were male, 47% female and 3% identified as neither male nor female. 60% said they lived in urban areas whilst 40% lived in rural areas.

The findings indicate the following:

Table 1: Children and Youth Resilience Measure

	Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Quite a lot	A lot
I am able to solve problems without harming myself and others	1	8	12	29	50
I know where to go in the community to get help	5	14	27	28	26
Getting an education is important to me	1	5	10	30	53
I try to finish what I start	1	9	19	36	35
I have people I look up to	3	11	21	35	30
My parents/caregivers know a lot about me	2	8	19	28	43
My family stands by me during difficult times	1	5	13	28	53
My friends stand by me during difficult times	1	7	15	38	38
I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful later in life	<1	8	14	40	37
I am treated fairly in my community	3	8	19	36	34
I feel I belong at my school	4	13	19	34	30
I enjoy my cultural and family traditions	3	8	19	32	39

"WE ALL HAVE OUR PART TO PLAY."



Table 2: Mean scores of Statements. By Gender and Rurality

	Males	Females	Urban	Rural	All
I am able to solve problems without harming myself and others	4.21	4.16	4.32	3.97	4.18
I know where to go in the community to get help	3.69	3.44	3.51	3.49	3.56
Getting an education is important to me	4.19	4.43	4.32	4.12	4.28
I try to finish what I start	4.02	3.95	4.04	3.73	3.96
I have people I look up to	3.82	3.85	3.84	3.55	3.79
My parents/caregivers know a lot about me	4.10	3.93	4.09	3.78	4.02
My family stands by me during difficult times	4.32	4.21	4.26	4.18	4.26
My friends stand by me during difficult times	3.97	4.18	4.03	3.91	4.06
I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful later in life	4.12	4.01	4.05	3.87	3.92
I am treated fairly in my community	3.85	4.08	3.89	3.82	3.74
I feel I belong at my school	3.75	3.85	3.67	3.64	3.95
I enjoy my cultural and family traditions	3.95	4.02	3.84	3.92	4.20

Table 2 shows the average scores of the statements broken down by gender and rurality. Calculating the averages allows a comparison of the strength of support for these statements. Higher scores show greater levels of support over the total survey population and subgroups.

Table 2 shows that most statements had at least moderate support among those participating. The weakest support was for the statement 'I know where to go for support in the community to get help.' The overall score of 3.56 shows that young people were somewhere between supporting this statement 'somewhat' and 'quite a lot'. Females' support was lower than that of males and were less likely to support, but there was virtually no difference between those living in rural and those living in urban areas.

The statement which had the strongest support overall was 'Getting an education is important to me' – with an average score of 4.28. This shows that the support is somewhere between 'quite a lot' and 'a lot'. This emphasises the importance education has for young people. Females were more likely than males to support this strongly, and young people in urban areas were more likely than those in rural areas to support this statement strongly, as Table 2 shows.

Except for the last statement 'I enjoy my cultural and family traditions', support for all statements was a little stronger among urban young people than rural young people. The picture is less clear when comparing the responses of males and females, but again to reiterate, overall, differences were quite small.

From the youth work perspective, a focus on help seeking in the community and work on the image of young people in the community seem prudent. The second lowest average score was recorded for the statement 'I am treated fairly in my community', which connects well with existing research around negative perceptions toward young people in the community. This is where acts of altruism (such as volunteering) for community members could indeed be a win-win for both young people and the communities.

VALUES WORKSHOP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:

Throughout the follow-up workshops, young people had the opportunity to reflect on varying scales and surveys as well as prioritising values that they believed to be important in supporting young people to be involved in community and social life.

- 69% of young people believed that being trusted by adults was important for them.
- 61% of young people believed that being respected by others was important.
- 58% of young people believed that carrying out actions while having fun/humour was important.

This has not only implications for the mental health and well-being of young people but how young people can be trusted and respected to actively engage in pro-social, empathetic and altruistic behaviours and actions. Youth work and educational approaches with young people should embed these values in their interactions with young people, providing space for young people to lead change for a fairer, more compassionate and inclusive world.

Survey on altruism and kindness developed by young people

The young peer researchers created a bespoke survey exploring altruistic attitudes and behaviours such as experiences of volunteering, donating to charity, supporting fund-raising activities, carrying out acts of kindness etc. This survey was completed in the college by 94 14-25 year olds. The survey found that:

- 98% of young people have donated money to charity
- 94.6% of young people have accrued out random acts of kindness
- 82.9% of young people believed they have demonstrated altruism in their lives
- 77.6% of young people have volunteered
- 76.5% of young people are interested in volunteering
- 93% of young people believed that showing kindness had a positive effect on others
- Young people show compassion and kindness to others regularly (75% of the time)

Using an established Altruistic Personality Scale (Rushton, J.P. Chrisjohn, R.D Fekken, G.C, 1981)

216 young people completed this survey on altruism. The results indicated that:

- 36% of young people have demonstrated altruistic actions 'once'
- 39% of young people have demonstrated altruistic actions 'more than once'
- 14% of young people have demonstrated altruistic actions 'often'



QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

The surveys and qualitative findings indicate that young people to some degree have engaged in activities that are empathetic and aligned to altruism, even though this may not necessarily be regular. Young people commented that they needed to know more about what altruism is and what it might involve and why.

Altruism helped to change my values on helping others.

Most young people enjoy doing good and expressing acts of kindness to others. Young people commented that adults needed to trust young people's motivations, intentions and actions.

Lack of trust can keep young people from getting involved in altruism.

Young people believe that it can become a way of living and being, and that it helps you feel a sense of contribution, especially when friends and family are engaging in such a manner.

Altruism helps promote good self-esteem and improves self-confidence. It also maintains friendships.

When you give kindness to others without expecting anything back, you get that proud feeling.

The programme had a positive impact on my confidence. The more we do good for others, the better we feel.

Young people reflected on how altruism and social action can become contagious in that you want to show solidarity and alliance with others who are seeking and leading change for the betterment of everybody. They believed it also helps to change perceptions of young people.

Young people giving back to their local community, can also help break down stereotyping of young people.

I believe that altruism can start a chain reaction like a butterfly effect. Making someone feel happy or good, they may get the compulsion to make others feel happy or good.

Young people recognised through the workshops that small acts of kindness and everyday actions equated with compassion and altruism.

No kindness is ever wasted, however small.

What I do every day, to every teacher, is I tell them all to have a great day. They feel good, therefore I feel good.

SECTION 3

A SOCIOLOGICAL/SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY YOUTH WORK LENS TO BUILDING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

At YouthAction NI, we have a tested LifeMaps positive psychology through youth work mental health and well-being model. This model focusses on resilience (managing and navigating life's challenges and difficulties) and positivity (reframing outlooks, seeing and seizing opportunities). Through this approach, we support young people to develop outlooks, habits and practices to build happiness and well-being. The techniques and habits highlighted in the LifeMaps model need to be applied regularly and together, and require ongoing attention throughout life as many challenging and testing situations emerge.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many young people experienced overwhelming anxieties and challenges to well-being. The narrative about the active role of young people in helping others; in preparing and delivering care packages to others who were struggling, isolated or worried has been lost to some extent during the pandemic. By helping others and demonstrating such kindness and compassion has helped many of these young people to improve their own sense of happiness and well-being. There is evidence to suggest that when you help others, it can promote physiological changes in the brain linked with happiness (Post, 2014).

In a study by James House at the University of Michigan Research Centre, investigators found that doing regular volunteer work, interacting with others in a warm and compassionate way, dramatically increased life expectancy and probably overall vitality as well (Cutler and Dalai Lama, 1999:102).

Much media reporting would lead us to believe that young people and adults alike have become more individualistic and competitive. However, we know through youth work that many young people enjoy co-operation and are interested in the well-being of others. It is timely to reclaim this narrative that young people care, demonstrate compassion and act in ways that benefits others.

ALTRUISM

The word 'altruism', derived from the Latin 'alter' (other), was used for the first time by one of the founders of sociology August Comte. For Comte, altruism implies 'the elimination of selfish desire and of egocentrism as well as a life devoted to the well-being of others' (Ricard, 2013: 15).

It would appear that compassion and caring behaviour contributes to good emotional health with feelings of happiness, and balanced perspectives and outlooks. Youth work has much youth volunteering, altruism and compassion at its core. The profession has documented many models in recent years that help us to explore individual strategies to improve well-being. It is timely to reconnect our more sociological foundations in which connections, care altruism and being 'other-regarding' are nurtured through youth work.

Youth work is founded on creating healthy and positive relationships between young people and others in their communities. It has nurtured volunteering and social action based on giving and doing kind things for others. Volunteering and helping others through volunteering for example can help us feel a sense of belonging, connect with friends and with our community. Relating and connecting with people, helping others can improve our support networks and encourage us to be more active. This in turn can improve self-esteem.

'Altruistic (other-regarding) emotions and behaviours are associated with greater well-being, health, and longevity.' (Post, 2005: 66).

It seems that volunteering started in adolescence enhances social competence and self-esteem, protects against anti-social behaviour and substance abuse and protects against teen pregnancies and academic failure. (Allen et al., 1997).

Various studies indicate that, while we may understand the benefits of benevolence as devolving chiefly to the well-being of its recipients, doing good nourishes the giver as well. Depending on what a given study sets out to measure, the documented benefits may be psychological or physical, or both.

Valuing the other and being concerned about his/her/their situation are two essential components to altruism (Ricard, 2013: 19).

Good relationships protect our mental health and well-being at any stage of life. People who are more socially connected are happier, physically healthier and live longer (Mental Health Foundation, 2021).

Youth work has the opportunity at this time to reclaim and represent altruism, compassion and kindness as a core approach to supporting the well-being of both young people and the wider community. Young people do not exist in isolation and approaches must not solely focus on individualistic interventions. Young people noticing and experiencing the wider environment and engaging with others through collective action has the potential to improve and have impact that is more significant on the well-being of the wider community.

Some may argue that altruism could be a selfish act, driven by self-interest, opportunity and a link to some material reward. Sociological research, however, indicates that offers of remuneration degrade the quality of the altruistic actions and not necessarily a desire for something in return. Rather than seeing young people and individuals as selfish and egoistic, we believe that young people are inherently good and have a desire for the greater good of their communities and wider society.

Having a more asset-based outlook helps us to move away from deficit-based approaches in which young people are seen as being a problem or as having a problem. An asset-based approach fosters hope by shifting the focus from “what’s wrong with us?” to “what’s right with us?”. It assumes that, even though there may be problems, sometimes very serious ones, there are also untapped resources and capacities inherent in every individual, organisation, or community that can be put into use to improve current conditions. Discovering and affirming these underutilised assets and untapped potential are hallmarks of an asset based approach to community work. An asset-based approach makes visible and values the skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a person or the wider community. Asset-based approaches emphasise the need to redress the balance between meeting needs and nurturing the strengths and resources of people and communities. It is strengths-driven and opportunity focussed.

Altruism is not necessarily formed out of people in a good mood, with a comfortable life and who want to do good for others. It can be borne out of suffering and life stressors wherein people engage proactively in altruistic activities to improve the life conditions of others. In such a case, altruism can be born out of suffering. Such stress and suffering in life can lead to empathy and pro-social behaviours (Davis, Martin-Cuellar and Luce, 2019).

The good news is that many young people are altruistic and engage in altruistic behaviours that benefit and improves the health and well-being of others. **The even better news is that altruistic motivations and behaviours also improve the health and well-being of the young person.**

Multiple examples are enacted through youth work in which young people are champions for empathy and have civic courage to improve the lives of others.

The French psychologist Jacques Lecomte identified four mechanisms (referenced by Ricard, 2013: 221) that adults can use to nurture altruism among young people:

1. Exploring affection;
2. Acting in an altruistic way oneself, thereby serving as a an example;
3. Making children aware of the impact of their actions on others;
4. Providing children with the opportunity to be useful to others.

Positive attitudes to altruism can be nurtured further through the youth work approach and programming. Through group-based reflections young people experience a circle of altruism and often experience a profound feeling of shared experiences and shared humanity. Social action, youth-led campaigns and other community actions are some such examples enacted by young people. It can often be inspiring and contagious for friendship groups to get involved and where a ripple effect of generosity, kindness and compassion transcends communities.

In social psychology, altruism refers to behaviour characterised by perspective-taking and empathy, which is undertaken with the intention of benefitting another person where the donor has the choice not to do so (Hewstone and Stroebe, 2021: 27). In short it can foster behaviours in which humans help other humans. It can be closely aligned with helping behaviours and pro-social behaviours. It is argued that people often help one another through empathy and social responsibility. Empathy is an affective state that is triggered when an individual witnesses the emotional state of another person. This feeling state results from adopting the perspective of the other and understanding his or her emotions (Hewstone and Stroebe, 2021: 292). Social responsibility prescribes that people should help others who are dependent on them rather than people being self-sufficient and taking care of themselves.

‘Acting for the good of the groups is a noble ideal to which we as humans often aspire.’ (Hewstone and Stroebe, 2001: 28).

'True' altruism has been defined as 'voluntary, intentional behaviour motivated to benefit another that is not motivated by the expectation of external rewards or avoiding externally produced punishments or aversive stimuli' (Chou, 1996: 297). Furthermore, Monroe (2002: 107) states that altruism consists of the following:

1. Altruism must involve action. Good intentions or well-meaning thoughts are not enough.
2. The action must have a goal, although the goal may be either conscious or reflexive.
3. The goal must be designed to help another. If another person's welfare is an unintended or secondary consequence of behaviour motivated primarily to further one's own welfare, the act is not altruistic.
4. Consequences are less important than intentions.
5. Altruism sets no conditions. The purpose of the altruistic act is helping another; there is no anticipation or explanation of reward for the altruist.
6. In addition to these five points, conceptualisations of altruism often contain a sixth:
7. Altruism must carry the risk of diminution of the actor's well-being.

Social psychologists see the motion of empathy as a central factor to better understanding altruism. Researchers believe that some behaviour is truly altruistic with evidence that empathy leads to altruism (Batson et al., 2012).

No matter what the motivation or rationale for altruism, it surely is welcoming that people are helping others, as long as it is not to exploit or hurt another. If the individual or groups act in altruistic ways they may indeed be benefitting themselves personally and this is valid and worthwhile.

RESEARCH AND CASE STUDIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Altruism and goodness have been historically aligned to church, religion and faith. It is certainly not exclusive to this sphere, but much empathy and altruism has often been nurtured here. Religious studies and influences are mostly interested in emphasising the positive impact religiosity can have on young people's lives and their communities, which under certain circumstances, of course, it can. It is also important to be mindful that a conservative religious ethos in youth work may hinder the flourishing of young people's development.

Much of youth work has favoured terms such as volunteering and social action which can have less of a religious undertone. Volunteering can of course also be an altruistic act, just as much as altruistic dispositions – religiously informed or not – i.e. the desire to help people in need, may direct young people towards formal or informal volunteering.

Psychological/psychometric approaches are also prevalent in youth work approaches. Youth workers have embodied positive psychology, resilience and positive mental health interventions that support the individual young person to develop or consolidate techniques and tools that build their mental fitness and/or overall well-being. However, psychology is again a subject often focusing on individual traits and individual differences, and it is not so strong focusing on group dynamics, social contexts and collective action, which is of course, what youth work is all about.

Some psychological approaches and publications are based on quite a small number of participants in 'lab-based' settings. These experimental studies do not wholly resemble the reality of the social contexts in which young people operate, but they can still be insightful. The following small-scale study was developed in such a small setting, but the tool was tested in a number of contexts and could be used and/or adapted for youth work to explore altruism.

- Büssing, A., Kerksieck, P., Günther, A. and Baumann, K. (2013). Altruism in adolescents and young adults: Validation of an instrument to measure generative altruism with structural equation modelling. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 18 (4), 335-350.

"YOUNG PEOPLE ARE KEY TO SHARING KINDNESS"



The body of work around this tool is a result of an international collaboration of academics testing a research instrument to measure generative and functional altruism in adolescents/young adults. 'Generative altruism' evolved as an 'attitude and commitment to help and care for others without expecting any rewards or direct benefit'. The Generative Altruism Scale (GALS) was tested and statistically verified, and can be applied in working

with young people to assess their values with regard to helping others (see Figure 1 below). The authors argue that 'GALS could be used for empirical studies analysing the connection between altruism and the development of ethical values and pro-social behaviour. Particularly, compassion as an intrinsic motivator could be fostered in appropriate education programmes.

Figure 1: GALS Questionnaire. Edited Proposed English Version

The following statements are about things some people may do to help others. Different people have different views on whether or not these are sensible things to do. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' in relation to these actions. Please have a look at these statements below and say how often you would do these things.

Question	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Very often
In my spare time I volunteer for others (e.g. for a charity, in a care home, or in the community).	0	1	2	4	5
I donate money to charity.	0	1	2	4	5
When I see a person in need, I approach them and ask them how I can help them.	0	1	2	4	5
When I see a person in need, I give them money.	0	1	2	4	5
When I see a person in need, I think about how I could help meet their needs.	0	1	2	4	5
Even if someone I do not know very well asks me for help, I will still help them.	0	1	2	4	5
If someone I do not know very well wants to borrow something from me that is really important to me, I will lend this to them regardless.	0	1	2	4	5
I would also lend money and possessions to people who are not in my immediate circle of friends.	0	1	2	4	5
I help others even when there is no direct benefit to me.	0	1	2	4	5
I put my own material well-being second to that of the community.	0	1	2	4	5
When I see suffering I try to find ways to alleviate it.	0	1	2	4	5

"IT IMPROVES YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE HEALTH OF OTHERS."



CASE STUDY: NORTHERN IRELAND (STRABANE)

YouthAction has been supporting two young men in Strabane 13 and 14 year olds. One of these young people has been demonstrating altruism from the age of 11 years from raising money for charity to helping out in his community. Corin has raised money for the Church roof, got his friends to do a head shave for a cancer charity, raised funds for a local rescue service and supported others in local fundraising events. This young man loves fundraising and gives each event 100% commitment. As well as his fundraising and community work, he is also a young entrepreneur from running a garden centre, a mobile shop at the side of his house and recently invested in a trailer, which he has converted into a sweet trailer for large events.

Corin noticed that his cousin Colt who is the 13-year-old, was going out at the weekends and drinking on the streets. Corin decided to take his cousin under his wing and support him. The two of them, go everywhere together and there has been a change in behaviour since the pair have embarked on joint social action and altruistic adventures.

Both boys have been gathering evidence of their efforts for their Youth Achievement Awards at YouthAction and both couldn't believe what they achieved. Corin remarked, "isn't it funny school can't get me to write, but when you do something you enjoy, you can write loads." Corin went on to say, "in the past two days I learnt and achieved more than I have in the last 6 months at school." Talking about school, Corin only attends school a few days a week and usually just for a few hours each day. He would rather be out working in the community where he feels he learns much more.

As part their Gold Youth Achievement Award Corin and Colt have raised over £2,000 for a cancer charity, they have also organised a number of smaller events/activities and raised almost £2,000 for a local voluntary rescue service. They are also planning a positive mental health messaging project, where they will share positive messages, using short videos.

Both Corin and Colt have been selected as #iwill ambassadors, which will involve campaigning, volunteering, fund-raising, mentoring and making a difference to others while sharing their success stories. The #iwill ambassadors is lead by UK Youth and managed in Northern Ireland by Volunteer Now.

CASE STUDY: THE RELATIONSHIP OF ALTRUISM AND HEDONISM

An article by Lähdenmaa (1999) focuses on hedonism and altruism found in young volunteers in Finland.

The author was interested in the moral values and ideals of young people and tested this through a small scale study undertaken in Finland where the author interviewed 8 young people aged 17-24 years who volunteered in an alternative youth project ('Walkers cafés' /drop-in café). This is how the Cafés are described:

'The night cafe is like a 'comfortable living room on a Friday night where young people can come to visit'. The cafe has a lot of small rules, like 'sitting on the table is not allowed'. The content of the message is that although the Walkers people do not accept everything they do, they accept the youngsters as they are.' (p. 22)

Theoretically, the author states they draw on Mother Theresa's self-sacrificing ethos and also the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's duty-based ethics which explores basic moral questions around the sense of obligations to help and support others.

Their study showed that volunteers were all guided by positive feelings and enjoyment they got from volunteering, but one person also reported instrumental reasons connected to their plans to have a career in youth work as the main reason to volunteer. The author found that the majority of interviewees were firmly guided by hedonistic principles to an extent that they stated that they would quit volunteering if there was an instrumental aspect to it. The good feelings were based on the experienced togetherness of volunteers and the fact that they were doing something useful. Volunteering led to a sense of belonging in the team and created a positive and accepting atmosphere. The authors identified this ethos of 'collective work towards a general good', which they termed 'hedonistic altruism'.

CASE STUDY: LIFE STRESSORS AND ALTRUISM

Davis and Martin-Cuellar and Luce (2019) examine the altruism born of suffering model in a culturally diverse sample of 202 young adults with an average age of 21 years.

The authors hypothesise that major life events interact with perspective taking to predict empathic concern, which would predict multiple types of pro-social behaviours among young adults. The authors found that the experience of stressful life events can lead to empathy, and, as a result, to different types of pro-social behaviours. The authors state that those who reported exposure to major stressful life events, are capable of perspective taking and empathic responding to people in similar or other stressful life events. According to the authors, the results of their study demonstrate altruism can be born out of suffering and they suggest that life stressors might therefore not always be negative and might promote resilience and social connection among young adults under specific conditions. This would be commonplace in youth work and might suggest that there is capacity to involve young people with such negative life experiences proactively in altruistic projects, and that their personal experiences might be harnessed to encourage other young people to come on board.

CASE STUDY: ALTRUISM AMONG YOUNG MUSLIMS

Shah and Ali (2012) undertook a study on altruism in young people among practicing Muslims in Pakistan.

The authors found that religiosity, altruism and the belief in a just world were all positively related to each other among 18-30 year old second and third level students. They used the Self-report Altruism Scale (SRA) (Rushton, 1981) in their study alongside the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJW) (Lipkus, 1991) to measure altruism.

The GBJW scale has 7 statements, such as "I basically feel that the world is a fair place" and "I feel that people who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves", to which the respondents have to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a 6-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Gender differences suggested that males showed more altruism than females, but due to the small sample size (60 males and 60 females), this difference should not be over-rated.

CASE STUDY: THE RELATIONSHIP OF ALTRUISM AND SELF-EFFICACY IN INDIA

Abraham and NC (2021) utilised Rushton's Self-Report Altruism (SRA) scale to measure altruism alongside Sherer's 30-item self-efficacy scale to explore the relationship between altruism and self-efficacy among a group of 35 males and 35 females in India.

The results of this study showed that there was a low positive correlation between self-efficacy and altruism, but this was not statistically significant. This study suggests that there is no relationship between self-efficacy and altruism, however, the authors suggested that compassion training programs, meditation practices, interpersonal interventions etc. could be employed in order to improve altruism and self-efficacy among young people. This may well have youth-work relevance, albeit the study was in a different cultural context.

CASE STUDY: ALTRUISM AND PERSONALITY TRAITS IN INDIA

Kinjari, Gopal and Mathew's psychological study of 73 young adults in India (2019) explored how altruism related to five main personality traits: They state that we already know that altruistic people have these personality traits:

1. Empathy;
2. Belief in a just world;
3. They act with social responsibility in mind;
4. They have an external locus of control; and
5. They are low on egocentrism or self-centredness – they are not competitive.

CASE STUDY: SOCIAL ACTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK IN THE USA

The American study by Lantieri (1999) reports that an educational intervention/programme with young people at risk encourages young people to take part in social action in their communities.

An evaluation was undertaken using interviews with facilitators and group discussions with participants. The author concludes that young people who are active early in life, whether in school or the larger community, are more likely to be active as adults. Similarly, students who are given greater responsibility often develop a greater sense of responsibility. The authors continue that true service learning helps students make the connections between what they are studying in class and real world issues. It engages students in action and reflection on important community, social, political, and environmental issues. And, it requires educators to think of students not as 'future' citizens but as active members of their community right now.



SECTION 4

PREPARATION FOR THE YOUTH WORKER/ TEACHER/COMMUNITY LEADER

In this section, we encourage the facilitator(s) to take time to consider some essential aspects of altruism and to reflect on some of the suggested exercises. Where possible, we suggest that this is a shared reflection with other colleagues. This helps to set the context for the facilitators before embarking on the actual delivery workshops alongside young people (section 5).

ALTRUISM AND YOUTH WORK

Youth work is a relational and caring profession that nurtures the development and welfare of young people and their communities. It is empathetic and compassionate in its concern and attention to the personal and social development of young people. Altruism is asking genuine questions such as, what do you think? How are you? It is having a genuine interest in other's well-being. It is listening, observing, noticing and suggesting possible intervention or action, sometimes based on agreement from the recipient party/parties.

Reflection:

When did you recently listen or observe something about a colleague or young person that made you take notice and to exercise care and interest? How did they respond? How did you feel?

Much of youth work invest time in telling the wider world that young people are not always anti-social and are in fact pro-social. Young people receive a negative press at many times and rarely are the positive stories and actions of compassion and helping documented. The pro-social element forms the fabric of youth work with many young people operating and acting together collectively in groups and building allyship to help others and improve communities.

Reflection:

How are young people portrayed in your local area/community? How can you work alongside others to challenge this perception?

Youth work nurtures consciousness among young people and supports young people to seek and act for social change. Young people are often more outward caring (other regarding) and less inward and individualistic in their motivations. By helping others this can often in fact help their own development, outlook and well-being. This can be local actions to save a church roof or global actions to address environmentalism /climate challenges or to stand up against racism. Group altruism and solidarity can lead to greater change and have greater impact.

Young people demonstrate helping behaviours through work and in their everyday lives. They are pro-social and work to benefit others, while also growing and learning themselves in terms of attitudes, behaviours, values and skills.

Reflection:

Think about examples of where young people have demonstrated pro-social behaviours. How might this be recognised by your club/group? How do others benefit in your area by these altruistic behaviours?

Young people are often described as 'good for nothing'. We have the opportunity to change this message from a negative to a positive. Young people often volunteer, demonstrate empathy and altruism without seeking monetary value or reward. Young people are key to sharing kindness and lighting the way to a better and fairer world.

A young person who becomes a volunteer, normally, does not receive any payment for the work that he or she does. Previous research on volunteerism suggests that intention to volunteer is positively related to altruistic value (Piliavin & Charng 1990). Burns et al., (2006) further emphasise that altruism is positively related to volunteerism among youth and adolescence. It also indicates that, among the

various factors that motivate young people and adults to volunteer, altruism appears to be involved with each. Therefore, regardless of the primary factor that motivates a young adult to volunteer, altruism may play a role as well; altruism seems to be pervasive throughout the various motivations to volunteer (Burns et al., 2006).

Reflection:

Why might young people volunteer or offer their support in helping others? What are the motivations and what outcomes might be achieved?

Indeed the youth work profession would pride itself on being relational and based upon principles of respect, compassion and goodness. Youth workers and youth organisations, while sometimes protecting themselves and their own organisations, often show compassion and care by looking out for one another, co-operating and collaborating together in a genuine manner that protects and grows the youth sector. It can be argued that there is a growing allyship and togetherness and inter-charity support, where people work outside of their silos and bubbles.

Reflection:

In what ways do you/your organisation demonstrate principles of compassion, kindness and altruism across the community youth sector? What positive approach do you take to nurture co-operation and collaboration?

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRO-SOCIAL ACTIONS AND ALTRUISM

The following framework is useful to consider when assessing personal and professional motivations and implications in helping others as well as understanding that exercised by young people.

Schwartz and Howard (1981) describe a process model of altruism through five successive steps:

1. Attention/Awareness

When the person/people become aware that others need help, recognise their distress or need and decide to select an altruistic action.

Reflection:

What catches your awareness/attention that might require action in your work?

What have you noticed that young people are aware of and would like to improve/change?

2. Motivation

This aligns to the feelings, values and moral obligations to intercede and help.

Reflection:

What do you value in life and through your work that impacted on your choices and actions?

What might motivate young people to engage in pro-social behaviours and altruistic actions?

3. Evaluation

This phase is centred on consideration to the costs whether physical, social or moral, for example, the fear of social disapproval of self-image perceptions.

Reflection:

Why might you resist or be cautious in being altruistic and in helping others?

What might deter young people from helping others? What might be the risks?

4. Defence

This may occur when the person starts to generate denial of responsibility, or where other priorities and obligations may be forefronted.

Reflection:

What examples can you think about where people have stepped away from helping others and for what reasons?

What might impacts on young people's commitment to helping others in the community?

5. Behaviour

The decision process based on that above will lead to either action or inaction.

Reflection:

How do you feel about decision-making? Are you good at communicating your decisions to others?

How might young people feel about making decisions and being able to act or having to step outside of their commitments?

ALTRUISM: PERSPECTIVES FROM YOUTH WORKERS

Based on feedback from youth workers and youth supporters (seminar, reflections) the following were discussed in relation to youth work, young people and altruism. We would suggest that you consider the motivations and factors that deter you/young people from being altruistic.

First, rank of those that might align most with your motivations or hesitations. These are only some examples; identify some of your own.

What motivates you to help others?



Now, rank those that might deter you from helping others? You might also consider factors that would deter young people.

What deters you from helping others?



WHAT IMPLICATIONS DO THE RESEARCH CASE STUDIES AND WORKER PERSPECTIVES HAVE FOR YOUTH WORK? (CONCLUSIONS)

Scientists show that those with an enlarged area of the brain have been proven to be altruistic. That said, evidence also suggests that altruism, empathy and pro-social behaviours can also be learned, experienced and nurtured early in life and throughout life. Motivations are varied for people to act in empathetic or altruistic ways. For many, it is recognising that a person, a community, a situation needs additional support.

From the research case studies and perspectives of those working with young people, we can make some conclusions and recommendations.

1. Nurturing youth activism and altruistic behaviours in early life are more likely to be demonstrate such behaviours in later life. Youth work can play an essential role in supporting young people's compassion, social action and social responsibility. Find the hook and passion which can often come from lived experiences and observations.
2. Youth volunteering is aligned to acts of altruism and there by helping others and compassion can be explored and developed through youth work and educational programmes.
3. Youth workers and educators should open up conversations with young people about the factors that enable and limit altruistic and empathetic behaviours.
4. The GALS (Generative Altruism Scale) can be used with young people to assess their interest, values with regard to helping others (e.g. I help others even when there is no direct benefit to me).
5. Peer education and peer support can form a strong movement among young people in creating change for a better, fairer, compassionate and more inclusive world. Young people find happiness and goodness in collective work towards a general good.
6. Youth workers should role model compassion and altruism as this can impact positively on young people's behaviours and actions.

"A chain reaction of compassion unfolds as young people recognise and understand the role they can play in helping others" (Olivia Davidson-Millar, Youth Worker, 2023).

7. Altruism through work plays a direct correlation in improving young people's mental health and well-being. They can have fun while helping others, feel valued, have a sense of purpose and contribution as well as growing their attitudes, outlooks, perceptions and skills.
8. Young people engaging in collective community social action and pro-social behaviours supports young people as co-investors in community development and to have ownership in improving communities, while also challenging negative stereotypes of young people. Altruism supports citizenship and participative democracy. Young people want to be trusted by adults.
9. Early responsibility can lead to greater responsibility in other areas of life and motivate young leaders in areas of social, political and environmental activism.
10. With so many young people being supported by youth workers to find their altruistic journeys, youth work can better profile its impact on wider society and demonstrate the return on social investment and in changing and improving lives and communities.

Reflection:

On reviewing these top 10 conclusions, what factors do you need to develop or improve possibilities for youth activism and altruism?

What might be the key 'game-changer' for you in growing pro-social behaviours?

How might your team of workers/volunteers role model values that align with compassion, kindness and social responsibility?

How can young people, team members and the wider community benefit from approaches that are pro-social and altruistic?

What would happen if you do nothing? Would it matter?

How might you pitch a training programme to young people/ team members?

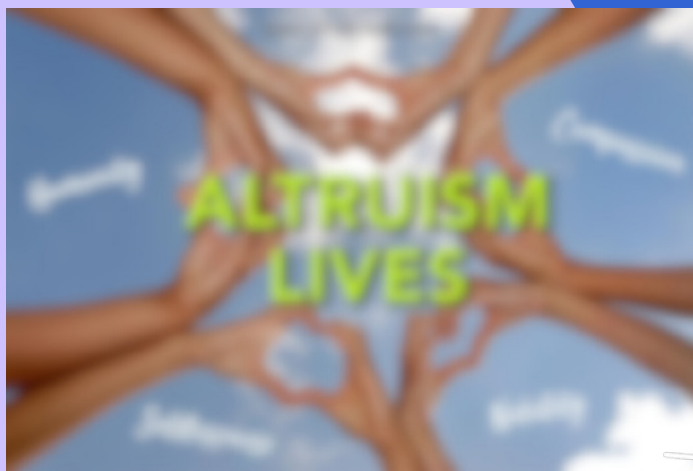
How confident do you feel?



SECTION 5

Altruism in Youth Work

PRACTICAL RESOURCES AND TECHNIQUES TO SUPPORT EXPLORATION ON ALTRUISM



Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative
altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Using this resource

YouthAction NI have developed this resource in partnership with young people and carried out a pilot with over two hundred 13-15 year olds and with thirty five 18-25 year olds.

This section is the altruism workshop delivery which includes session plans, worksheets and evaluation forms.

The total workshop delivery is three hours, which can also be split over smaller sessions, depending on time.

Take time to read over the first part of this resource, which will give you in depth information on altruism and some of the findings of the work we have developed.

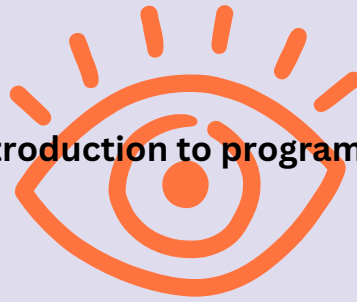
Go through this section for a better understanding of the content, which will help you prepare for your sessions.

Session Plan for altruism

Section	Time	Activity	Resources
1	15 minutes	Introduction to programme. Group Icebreaker	Workbook Icebreaker activity
2	15 minutes	What is altruism? What are the benefits? Agree/Disagree exercise	2 A4 signs with agree and disagree Agree/Disagree statements
3	15 minutes	Corin's story and reflection	Paper for team reflection, Questions and Corin's story
4	30 minutes	What are values? Values worksheet Values T-shirt exercise	Worksheet on values. (1 copy for each young person) & value cards T-shirt exercise (1 per team)
5	20 minutes	Altruistic personality quiz Gacie's story	GALS Quiz sheet (1 for each young person) Paper for team reflection Questions and Gacie's story
6	20 minutes	Altruism cards exercise Eamon's story	Pack of cards for each group Paper for team reflection, Questions and Eamon's story
7	20 minutes	Small group exercise on sharing kindness	Copy of exercise sheet (one per group)
8	25 minutes	Develop personal action plan Develop a pledge to make change	1 copy of action plan and pledge for each young person
9	15 minutes	Reflection/evaluation	1 copy of evaluation per young person

Section ①

Introduction to programme



During this part of the session, use the time to introduce yourself and give an outline of the programme and explain how the session will be delivered and the programme outcomes.

Icebreaker activity

As this may be a new group, its important to deliver an ice breaker activity to help settle the group and build relationships. You may have an icebreaker of your own, that will suit the age group and the environment. This depends if you're in a school classroom setting or a youth centre setting.

You can find some icebreakers at the back of this resource.

Section



What is altruism?

Regard for others, both natural and moral without regard for oneself; devotion to the interests of others; brotherly kindness; selflessness; contrasted with egoism or selfishness. An example here is a random act of kindness.



There is some evidence to suggest that when you help others, it can promote physiological changes in the brain linked to happiness.

Benefits of altruism

Helping others can also improve our support networks and encourages us to be more active.

It creates a sense of belonging and reduces isolation.

It helps keep things in perspective.

It helps make the world a happier place – it's contagious.

The more you do for others, the more you do for yourself.

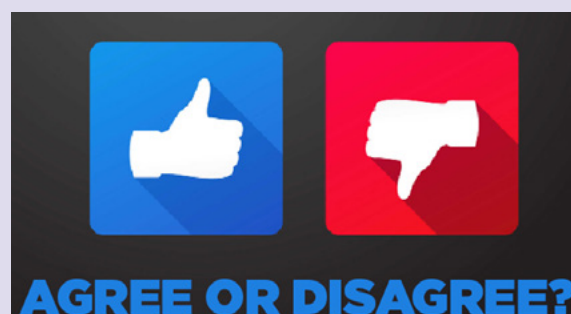


Section ②

Agree/Disagree exercise

Read out each of the statements below to your group. Once the young people hear the statement they can choose to agree or disagree. Write AGREE and DISAGREE on two pieces of paper and place onto a wall either side of the room. Young people then walk to either after the statement is read out. Ask young people why they chose to stand at AGREE or DISAGREE

1. Youth work and education should teach us about social action and altruism.
2. Altruism and social action are learned through experience.
3. Young people are leading the way for social change.
4. By helping others you grow with your knowledge and skills.
5. Helping others makes you feel good about yourself.
6. Communities involve young people in making people's lives better.
7. By helping others and showing compassion, it also helps your own health and well-being.
8. Young people are more likely to help others and be altruistic through their peer groups and collective action.
9. Being a volunteer and helping others improves your happiness and life expectancy.
10. Altruism is showing care to others.



Section



Corin's Story



In the following 2 pages, read Corin's story to your group on how Corin shares altruism.

Give young people a piece of paper and ask them to note key words, while you are reading the story. This will allow them to focus more and help them to answer the questions below.

- * Why do you think Corin volunteered in his community?
- * How would this benefit Corin now and in the long term?
- * Would Corin's story motivate you to help others, why?
- * Why did other people in the community help Corin?

15 year old Corin from Strabane in Co.Tyrone.

The story beginnings when Corin was just 10 years old, where he took part in his first fund raising event. Corin decided to raise money for the local church roof in 2018. Corin decided to use his own money he had saved to take some of his family to Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During this trip Corin got friendly with a local businesswoman who was selling prayer items. After telling her his story they struck a deal. Corin bought Rosary beads and prayers from the lady and then sold them in the hotel where he was staying. In doing this he raised £300 for the church roof.

In 2020 Corin started the 'Corin's Easter egg Appeal for Sick Children.' Corin's goal was to have 30 Easter eggs donated to him, so he could then donate them to the local children's ward. After his social media appeal, people started to donate eggs. Corin had stated *"it was just crazy, people kept sending messages every day, looking to donate, I was shocked with the response."* At the end of his appeal Corin had 600 Easter eggs which he donated to 9 hospitals across Northern Ireland as well as care homes and donated £600 to the Children's Cancer Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. The cash was raised by the public donating money and when Corin attended a family wedding the wedding guest started a collection raising £300. Corin has said he felt so proud and important with his appeal.

You can see from Corin's Easter egg Appeal, that his acts of altruism encouraged others to do the same, by donating Easter eggs and money. It took a young person to take a lead role and from this helping others to share their kindness.

In 2021 one of Corin's friends came to him and said, we should shave our heads for charity. Corin decided to jump at the idea and take a lead role. Corin was getting motivated again and got the ball rolling. Corin got a group of his friends both male and female to sign up to the challenge. Once again Corin got onto social media to promote his event. The community came together and supported Corin. One company donated bouncy castles, another donated a lorry that could be used for a stage, singers came forward and members of the community came forward to volunteer their time. Once again, the event was successful and raised a total of £3000, for Cancer Research.

Corin is also a young volunteer for the Community Rescue Service in Strabane, which he offers many hours each week from helping with local community issues, doing safety checks on life rings and other equipment to assisting with rescues and stewarding at community events. During the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 Corin helped the charity in supporting the local community in delivering food parcels, activity packs, medicines while people were house bound. After a year in the project Corin became a unit commander leading the cadets. During his time at the Community Rescue Service Corin raised around £2500, for the charity. Apart from the charities, Corin has help with preparing parcels for the Ukraine appeal, worked on a project designing a safety workbook, delivered to 800 school children and planned and delivered a family fun day to raise money. Corin is also an #Iwill ambassador lead by UK Youth in which he takes part in social action programmes and shares his stories to encourage others to do the same.

In January 2023 Corin decided to nominate a local charity Foyle Hospice and set a target to raise £10,000. In April 2023 Corin has already hit the £6,000 mark. People in the local community appreciate the work and kindness that he provides and have come forward to help him achieve this goal.

Research has shown that selfless acts improve our psychological well-being and our overall quality of life. The positive effect is particularly strong when it comes to teenagers.



Section

4



Values

Values are important to us, and makes us who we are. Give young people a copy of the values worksheet and ask them to list values which are important to them and then to rank these values from the most important value (1) least important value (10).

You can also give the young people a copy of the value cards in this pack to help them along. Remind young people that they can add their own values.

Afterwards have a discussion on the findings and ask why they ranked their values in that order. Also ask the young people how they think these values have shaped them into what they are today.

Information for presenter only

In 2022/23 we delivered this workshop with 240 young people (12-14 year olds). This exercise highlighted the following three top values. Don't mention these figures to your group until you complete the exercise. Use this for the feedback.

Trust at 79%
Respect at 70%
Humour at 67%



Section 4

Values Worksheet

Make a list of all your values, things which are important to you. Don't worry about the ranking at this stage.	Rank 1-10 (1 as your top value) Looking at your 10 values, now rank them of importance to you.

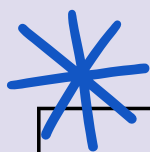
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Make a list of all your values, things which are important to you. Don't worry about the ranking at this stage.	Rank 1-10 (1 as your top value) Looking at your 10 values, now rank them of importance to you.

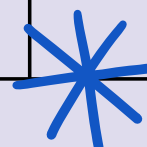
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Value Cards

Print out and each sheet can be shared

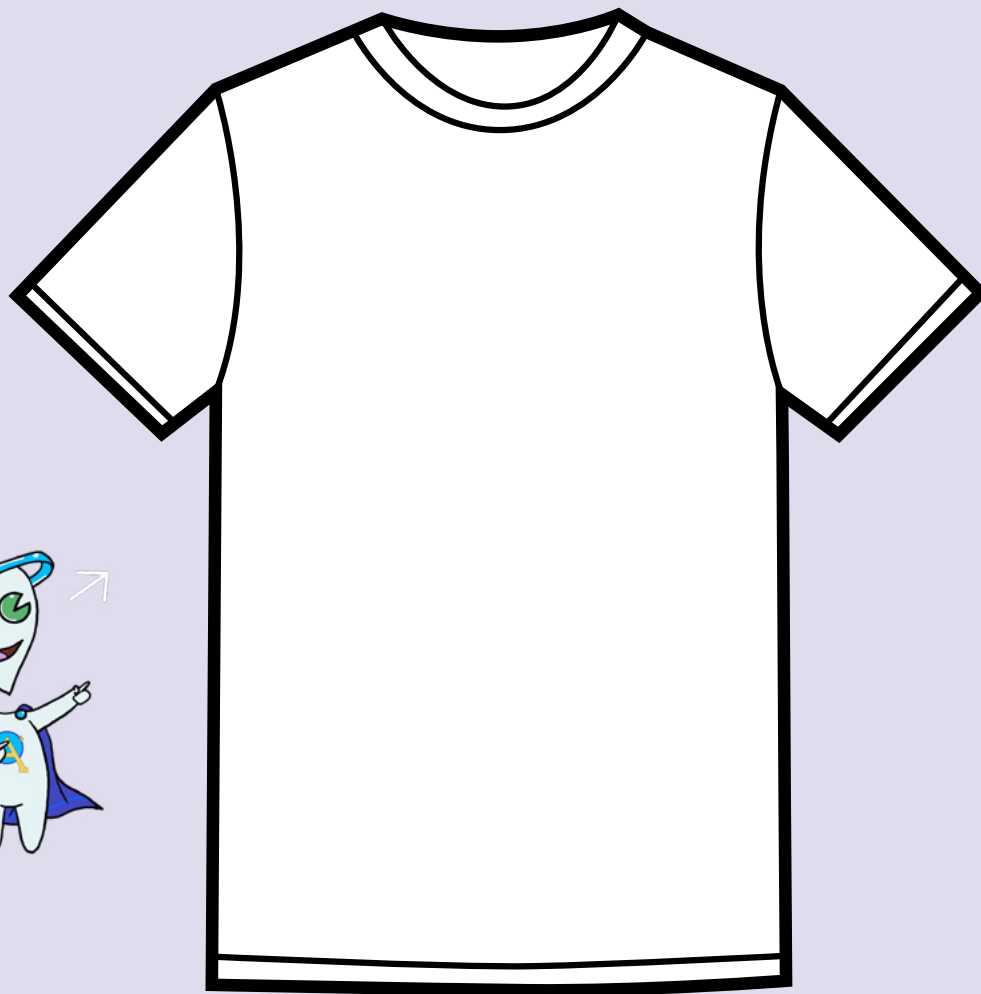


Acceptance To be open to, and accepting of myself, others, life	Assertiveness To respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want	Caring To be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc
Challenge To keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve etc	Compassion To act with kindness towards those who are suffering	Connection To engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others
Courage To be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat or difficulty	Contribution To contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others	Encouragement To encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself and others
Fitness To maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and well-being	Flexibility To adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances	Friendliness To be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others
Forgiveness To be forgiving towards myself or others	Fun To be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities	Gratitude To be grateful for, and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others, and life
Honesty To be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others	Kindness To be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others	Humour To see and appreciate the humorous side of life
Love To act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others	Patience To wait calmly for what I want	Respect To be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard
Responsibility To be responsible and accountable for my actions	Safety To secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others	Trust To be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable



Section 4 My values T-shirt

Give each small group a blank T-shirt template below with the 6 statements. Ask young people to choose a statement which means the most to them and transfer this statement to the T-shirt. They can give feedback on their reason.



If you had extra money, would you save it for a rainy day, or share it with someone who is having a rainy day?

Is it a housing crisis that we face, or is it a value crisis?

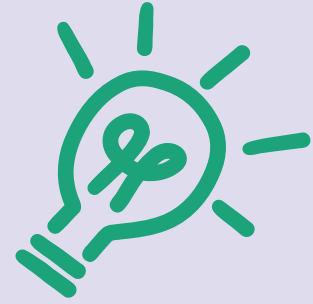
If you see a homeless person, would you walk past them or cross the road?

If you don't do well at school Does this mean you're a failure?

Education should teach us to make the world a better place?

Would you offer a spare room to someone in need, or keep it to gather dust?

Section



The Generative Altruism Scale (GALS)

Give each young person a copy of the Generative Altruism Scale questionnaire, which they complete on their own.

The aim of this scale is to measure generative and functional altruism in adolescents/young adults. It's an anonymous questionnaire using standardised questions.

The GALS can be used to analyse the connection between altruism and the development of ethical values and pro-social behaviour. Particularly, compassion as an intrinsic motivator could be fostered in appropriate education programmes.

The scale will let young people know how altruistic they are and areas they need to change to improve their score.

Go through the questionnaire before the young people complete it, so they have a clear understanding of the questions.



GALS Questionnaire

The following statements are about things some people may do to help others. Different people have different views on whether or not these are sensible things to do. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' in relation to these actions. Please have a look at these statements below and say how often you would do these things.

Question	Never 0	Once 1	More than once 2	Often 4	Very often 5
In my spare time I volunteer for others (e.g for a charity, school or in the community)					
I donated money to charity.					
When I see a person in need, I approach them and ask them how I can help them.					
When I see a person in need, I give them money.					
When I see a person in need, I think about how I could help meet their needs.					
Even if someone I do not know very well asks me for help, I will still help them.					
If someone I do not know very well wants to borrow something from me that is really important to me, I will lend this to them regardless.					
I would also lend money and possessions to people who are not in my immediate circle of friends.					
I help others even when there is no direct benefit to me.					
I put my own material well- being second to that of the community.					
When I see suffering I try to find ways to alleviate it.					
	x0	x1	x2	x4	x5
TOTAL					

Overall Score Gender Your age

Section 5

Gracie's Story



The following page, read Gracie's story to your group on how Gracie shares the importance of values.

Give young people a piece of paper and ask them to note key words, while you are reading the story. This will allow them to focus more and help them to answer the questions below.

- * Why did Gracie's family turn a crisis to a positive? How could you turn a crisis into a positive in your life?
- * Why do you think Gracie has so much passion and confidence?
- * If you had to live on basic needs, how would you cope and what would you miss from your current life?

18 year old Gracie, #iwill ambassador, England

18 year Gracie told her story. She started off by saying that her family currently live in a very small house and just found out that they will be evicted. The family decide to take the crisis and turn it into a positive. The family have decided to buy a tent and live out of this tent, while travelling around earning money to help pay for food and support local community charities. They will also be visiting other organisations in the UK offering their help and support while helping others and learning more. Gracie also said while others of her age are starting a new journey in college and university, she and her family are packing up and moving on a completely different journey around the UK. Gracie speaks with confidence and shares her story so well and talks about the passion and inspiration she has in helping others and has shared her story with many people. Gracie wants young people to think more on their own personal values and the importance of our values in life.

This is one of the statements she shares *“if you had extra money and didn’t really need it, would you keep it for yourself for a rainy day, or would you share it with someone who is having a rainy day?”*

So why, have they decided to change this crisis into a positive? In 2021 the family packed up and travelled for ten months around the UK. From this, they learnt about people along the way who had been struggling and decided to help them. Her parents wanted her and her siblings to build a new world. They believe, as a family that they have a role to help even more people and carry this through. Her home schooling wasn’t about passing exams or getting a job, it was about how to make the world a better place. Here is a family who can live on £5 per day and with surplus funds and invest in people and make new connections.

When looking at our own values we tend to look at materialistic things, having new clothes, larger television, signing up to memberships for things like Netflix, phone contract or the local gym. We all know how much money is wasted every year with people joining gyms in the New Year and only lasting a few months, before giving up. Wouldn’t it be more beneficial if we invested our money in others? would we feel much better?

Gracie is currently writing a manifesto for change on a practical plan, on what a different world could look like. Gracie states *“if we can open our eyes to a whole different way of looking at things, everything could change.”* Gracie also states that so many people don’t even feel in control of their lives, and believes we should be shifting our value system as values define everything that we aim for and what we prioritise.

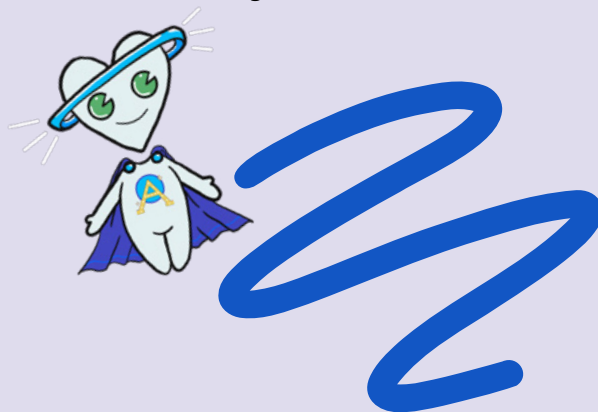
Section 6

Altruism Cards

In small groups give each group a copy of the altruism cards on the following page. You will need to print and cut these out and have a pack of cards for each small group.

Ask each group to put the cards into order from the most important to the least important. Have a discussion on why they have put the cards in that order.

Once this is completed, have each individual young person select one of the cards, on an altruistic act they would like to act upon.



Section 6 Altruism Cards

Help a friend with homework	Help my neighbour	Raise money for a charity
Do chores at home without being asked	Give positive comments to teachers	Volunteer at my school
Support someone who is being bullied	Pick up litter if I see it	Give compliments to others
Spend quality time with family	Be kind to others	Share a smile with others
Put money into a charity box	Share altruism with my parents	Make a gift or bake for someone
Share lunch with a friend	Look after a friend's dog/cat	Give up your seat to someone else

Section ⑥

Eamon's Story



Read Eamon's story to your group on the following page.

Give young people a piece of paper and ask them to note key words, while you are reading the story. This will allow them to focus more and help them to answer the questions below.

- * If you didn't spend so much time on social media platforms, what could you do to motivate yourself?
- * When young people make mistakes, why do they blame others for these mistakes?
- * Eamon states that young people need to be kind to others. What steps can you take to be kind to others?

18 year old Eamon from Limavady

Eamon starts off by saying, *"Young people don't use imagination."* Now a days young people spend a lot of time gaming, usually games involving conflict or violence; they communicate using on-line platforms and texting; they are not fully aware of the outdoors. He went on to say that, young people could not cope in a survival experience, as they do not have the life skills. The outside world does not exist and when help and support is needed, they do not know where to go.

Technology while important seems to have taken over. Young people need to explore more of the outdoors, become self-sufficient or learn the basic skills. They need to have the "will to live."

When asked about gaps, Eamon stated that education needs to change. More needs to be done to improve communication and encourage young people to talk more. For example, ask young people how they have been feeling in the last two weeks, what has been positive and what challenges did you face?

Young people need to be taught the tools to help with resilience for example; breathing exercise, meditation, sports, positive thinking and helping others by sharing kindness. They need to have passion for what they do.

All young people have skills and talents and people need to encourage young people to develop these. We need to encourage others. We need to look at how we can break the cycle and how young people break the cycle. What tools do they need to achieve this?

Eamon had stated we do what our minds tell us. If we think positive, we become positive. If we tell our mind that we cannot do it, well we won't do it. Young people have passion and skills and at times people put themselves down and these become barriers in their life and therefore don't focus on their goals. Eamon asked how can we get young people from where they are stuck now and to move forward in setting and achieving goals?

Two last points I would like to share. The food we put into our bodies, feeds our mind. Too many young people eat far too much processed food, junk food and sugary drinks, which all have a negative effect. Second point is music, and there is evidence out there that the use of music can calm the mind.

Eamon has a strong passion for living and helping others. He has an understanding of himself and others. He recognised how the positive tools helped him and now wants to share this with other young people. Eamon went on to say, we need to be kind to ourselves and be kind to others. This kindness needs to be shared more as it makes us much happier people and improves our mental health.

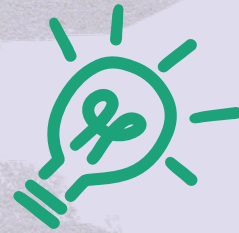
Final quote from Eamon;

"We are all on a journey of learning from the day we are born, accept this learning and we will develop to be our best."

Section Sharing Kindness Worksheet

Small group exercise on sharing kindness

Break into smaller groups and give each group a copy of the worksheet on the next page for them to complete.



Give each group ten minutes to complete the exercise and allow ten minutes for feedback to the larger group.



How would sharing kindness with others, help you as a person?



What small steps can you take, to help others?

How can you encourage others to share kindness?



Section

8

Give each young person a copy of the action plan for them to complete. Let the young people know that they should only set small realistic goals.

**Altruism
makes us
happy**



Giving to others, no matter how small, makes people feel happier.



I will make a change by...



**Altruism
is good for
our health**



People who volunteer tend to be happier and have less depression.



I will make a volunteer challenge by...



**Altruism
is
contagious**

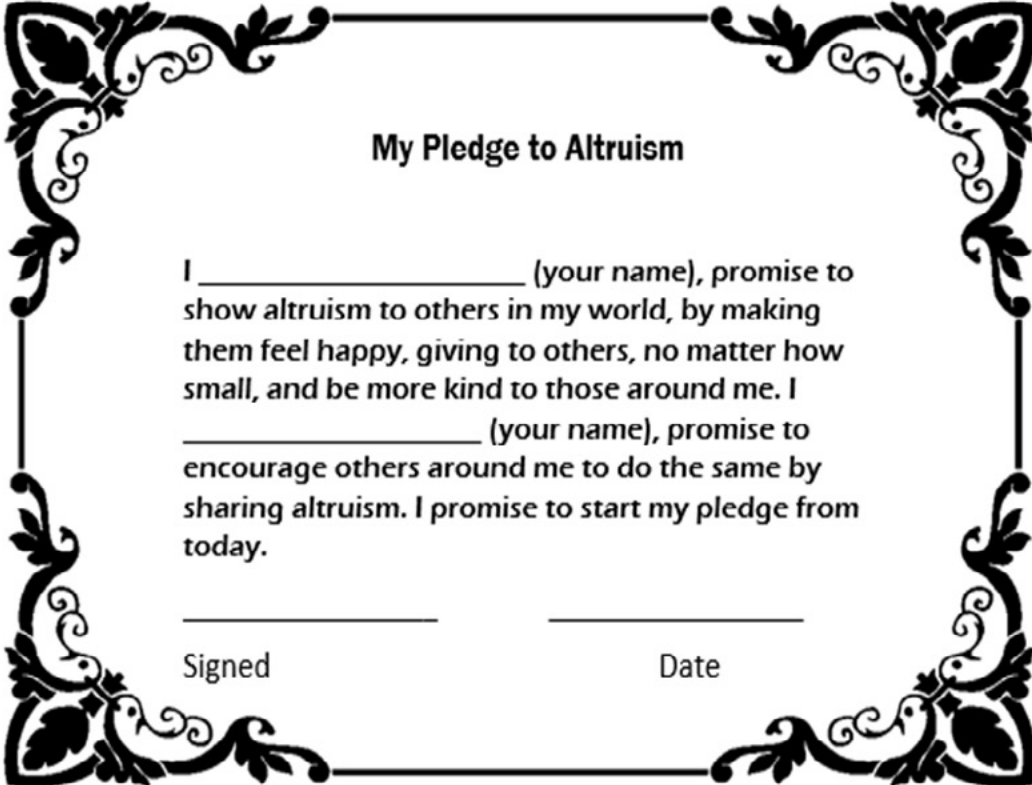


When we give to others, it also encourages others to do the same.



I will encourage others by...






My Pledge to Altruism

I _____ (your name), promise to show altruism to others in my world, by making them feel happy, giving to others, no matter how small, and be more kind to those around me. I _____ (your name), promise to encourage others around me to do the same by sharing altruism. I promise to start my pledge from today.

Signed

Date

-----cut-----cut-----cut-----cut-----cut-----cut-----cut-----cut-----



My Pledge to Altruism

I _____ (your name), promise to show altruism to others in my world, by making them feel happy, giving to others, no matter how small, and be more kind to those around me. I _____ (your name), promise to encourage others around me to do the same by sharing altruism. I promise to start my pledge from today.

Signed

Date

Section



Evaluation/Reflection



What did you like about the workshop?	What could we do to change it?	What have you learnt from the workshop?

Circle four words on what you felt about the workshop

Fun	Boring	New Ideas	Fresh
Inspiring	New	Challenging	Will work on my pledge
Exciting	Will share with others	Share my learning with parents	New Learning
Want to do more	Worked as a group	Positive	Never again

Feel free to add another comment



Ice Breakers

Fact or fiction?

Ask players to write down on a piece of paper one lie and two truths about themselves, and let the group figure out which ones are facts and which one is fiction.

Deserted island

Everyone should be seated in a circle. Start by telling them the following idea: 'Imagine that you were to be banished to a deserted island for a year, and all essentials provided, but you also get to choose one song, book, and a luxury item to bring along. What would you choose?'

Toss and Chat Game

What you will need: An inflated beach ball and a permanent marker.

Set-up: Write silly random topics on each colour portion of the beach ball, for example:

Have you ever waved at someone thinking you know them, only to realise they are the wrong person?

Who is your role model?

When was the last time you shared kindness?

What is an embarrassing song that you secretly enjoy?

What is your favourite hobby?

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

Self-esteem can be evaluated in a number of ways, but one of the most widely used in the mental health community is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The RSES was developed in 1965 by Morris Rosenberg. This scale consists of ten statements, five positive and five negative.

How to Calculate the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

On the following page you will find a scoring sheet which outlines the score (0-3) for each statement. So for whatever column they tick on each statement you can record that score.

For example if a young person ticks **agree** on the statement 1 *"On the whole I am satisfied with myself"* they are scored 2 points.

If they tick **strongly agree** on statement 8 *"I wish i could have more respect for myself"* they score 0 points.

Add up the total points on the completed scale.

A average score will be between 15-25 points. If a total score is below 15 this could indicate low self-esteem, or negative changes in their current situation. If they score above 25 this could show confidence and happiness with their life in the current situation.

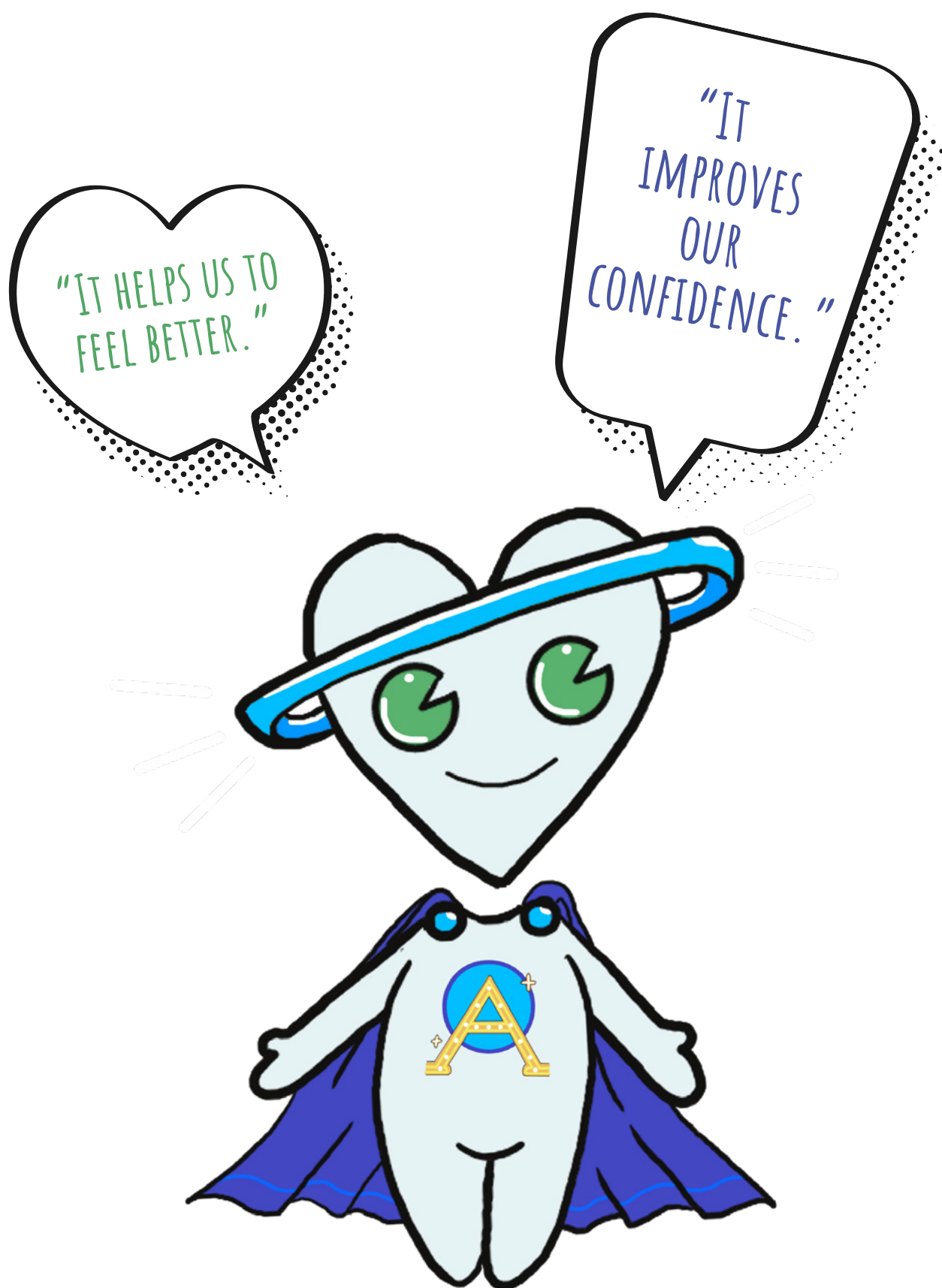
The scores on this scale can change at different times, depending on a young persons current situation. The scale helps young people to look at areas they need to change to improve self-esteem. The scale is also a useful tool if you are delivering a programme over a number of weeks.

Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale

	Statment	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	On the whole I am satisfied with myself				
2	At times I think that I am no good at all				
3	I feel that I have a number of good qualities				
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people				
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of				
6	I certainly feel useless at times				
7	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others				
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself				
9	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure				
10	I take a positive attitude toward myself				

Score Sheet

	Statment	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	On the whole I am satisfied with myself	3	2	1	0
2	At times I think that I am no good at all	0	1	2	3
3	I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3	2	1	0
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people	3	2	1	0
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of	0	1	2	3
6	I certainly feel useless at times	0	1	2	3
7	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	3	2	1	0
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself	0	1	2	3
9	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	0	1	2	3
10	I take a positive attitude toward myself	3	2	1	0



Introducing 'ALT'

MEET 'ALT', THE ALTRUISTIC HERO!

When it came to creating 'Alt', I wanted a sweet and benevolent looking character that was simple to look at. I found it a challenge trying to find images representing the core of the character itself, but I knew that Alt just had to be a super hero. A bastion of kindness and charity to those in need. The kind of hero that everyone can relate to. A fun-loving, generous, wise and compassionate being who, like us, wants to make the world a better place and to make our smiles a lot brighter.

I had a lot of fun designing 'Alt' and I find them adorable to look at. Alt wants to help guide us on how to be more selfless towards each other in order to improve on ourselves as well as bring happiness into others' lives, no matter how small the gesture or action we take. We all can be heroes, and I think Alt's overall look shows that anyone can be. 'Alt' represents altruistic attitude and behaviours that we can all embrace to help the well-being of others and to improve our own well-being in return.

Emma Gleeson
(Creator of Alt)



YOUTHACTION NI: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PRACTICES THAT BUILD YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

To complement the youth work professional approach of nurturing relationships and creating emotional, empathetic and learning spaces, YouthAction NI has developed the following mental health, well-being and resilience resources.

For working with young people:

LifeMaps positive psychology booklets



PALS (being a good friend)



Beat the Bully online



Bullseye: equality work with young women



Steeper Steps: Nature conscious practice



Get Set for life, skills and work



For working with adults/organisations:

LifeMaps positive psychology booklets



USEFUL LINKS TO AUDIO AND VISUAL RESOURCES

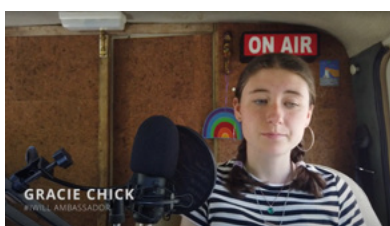
Young people and altruism



Islamic Youth Story



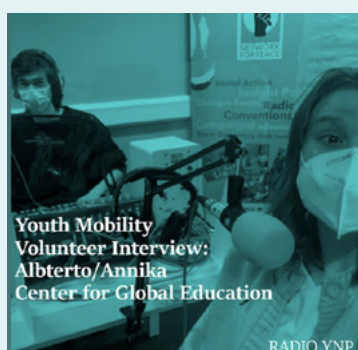
A Manifesto for Youth by Gracie Chick



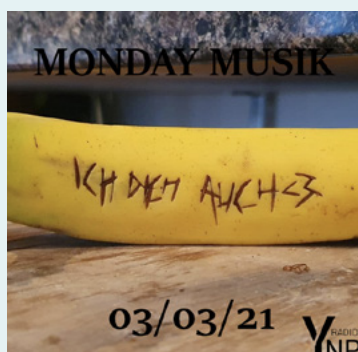
Max / The Volunteer Interview



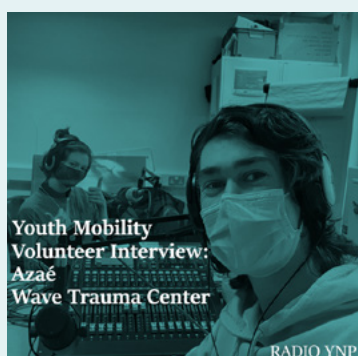
Alberto / The Volunteer Interview



Monday Musik 3rd March 2021



Azaé / The Volunteer Interview



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