



Universitetet
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How youth workers can prepare for and deal with risks

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My background



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Youth Work

The swiss army knife



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Prevention work

- Actions should take place and be organized within the youths **normal hang outs and learning environment**
- The actions should be **holistic**
- The actions should be **designed and adapted** to the target group
- The action should be **founded** in strategies and plans
- You should work in a **long term** perspective

Source: Vegard A. Schancke, "KoRus-Nord, Skriftserie – rapport 1/2005



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Prevention work

- The measures should be implemented as **early** in life as possible, the impact is best if they are implemented **before** you observe problematic or anti-social behavior
- **Continuity** in the work is essential
- Active **participation** of the target group is important. **Interactive** learning experience and a **resource based** approach seems as the best design for programs and projects.

Source: Vegard A. Schancke, "KoRus-Nord, Skriftserie – rapport 1/2005





Risk assessment and why it matters to me

Frequency – Consequences

Action to lower / handle risk



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Hazard / Threat	Cause	Probability (1-4)	Consequence (1-4)	Risk	Prevention	Responses	Responsible
				0			
Minor Injuries	Things not working, user mistakes	4	1	5	Keep up maintainance of place and eqiupment	Have first aid kit and first aid training	Youth center
Bullying	Social enviroment	2	2	4	Create rules with youth about how we treat eachother	Intervene, Report, Investigate, Implement action, Keep records	Youth center
Mental health crisis		2	3	5	Pay attention to changes in behaviour	De-escalate, Keep calm, listen, do not jugde, Stabalize, Remove weapons/drugs/uprescrib ed medicine, Contact proffesional help	Mental health institution
Abuse	Family	3	4	7			
Probablity	Consequece	Actions					
4 - Frequent (event occurs multiple times a year)	4 - Catastrophic		Take immediate action				
3 - Probable (event occurs yearly or more seldom)	3 - Critical		Risk reduction measures				
2 - Likely (event occurs every 10 years or more seldom)	2 - Dangerous		Easy measures				
1 - Unlikely (event occurs every 50 year or more seldom)	1 - Neglectable						



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What to look for?



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Warning signs of bullying

Signs a Child Is Being Bullied	Signs a Child is Bullying Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexplainable injuries• Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry• Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness• Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.• Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares• Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school• Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations• Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem• Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get into physical or verbal fights• Have friends who bully others• Are increasingly aggressive• Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently• Have unexplained extra money or new belongings• Blame others for their problems• Don't accept responsibility for their actions• Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity





Response

- Pay attention
 - You have a responsibility to pay attention to youths environment
- Intervene
 - Take action immediately if people are bullied. Remove danger, making sure you safeguard yourself and the youth
- Report
 - Report incident to relevant colleagues, contact parents, school and other relevant institutions
- Investigate
 - Get the full story, be a active listener. Use appropriate conversational techniques.
- Implement actions
 - Implement actions to prevent bullying taking place or continuing. These must be coordinated with parents, school and other relevant institutions
- Keep records
 - Make sure you document what you do, keeping in mind your confidentiality





Warning signs of mental health crises

A mental health crisis is any situation in which a person's actions, feelings, and behaviors can lead to them hurting themselves or others, and/or put them at risk of being unable to care for themselves or function in the community in a healthy manner.

Mental Health Crisis

- Unable to complete daily tasks like getting dressed, brushing teeth, bathing, etc.
- Verbally saying, writing or insinuating that they'd like to kill themselves and/or talking about death
- Withdrawing from friends, family and their typical social situations
- Showing impulsive or reckless behavior, being aggressive
- Having dramatic shifts in mood, sleeping or eating patterns





Response

- **De-escalate a crisis:** keeping your voice calm, listening to the person, moving slowly and avoiding making judgemental comments
- Know where to go for help. This can be a community mental health center, emergency room or psychiatric treatment facility.
- Identify family members and friends who can be available for help and to support the person in crisis.
- Share any history of drug and/or alcohol use you're aware of, plus any history of psychosis or suicide attempts.
- Consider things that have helped to stabilize and regulate the person in the past.
- Remove weapons, unprescribed medications, and items that can cause risk to their life.

Don't try to handle the situation alone. If you know someone struggling with depression or experiencing thoughts of self-harm, contact professional help



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Warning signs of suicide

Emotional Markers	Verbal Markers - talking about	Behavioral Markers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling depressed• Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed• Irritability• Anger• Anxiety• Shame or humiliation• Mood swings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Killing themselves• Their life having no purpose• Feeling like a burden• Feeling stuck• Not wanting to exist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolating from others• Not communicating with friends or family• Giving away possessions or writing a will• Driving recklessly• Increased aggression• Increased drug and alcohol use• Searching about suicide on the Internet• Gathering materials (pills or a weapon)
Youth specific warning signs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience bullying• Lose someone close to them• Experience physical, emotional, or sexual abuse		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abuse drugs or alcohol• Have a history of mental illness• Feel uncertain about their sexual orientation





Response

- Don't hesitate to use specific language, such as asking, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" If the answer is yes or maybe, ask them what they feel most comfortable doing, whether it's calling a crisis hotline or scheduling a counseling, doctor's appointment or contact with other relevant institutions
- If a person is thinking of suicide, it's also important to ask them if they have a plan. If they say yes, assist them in seeking **immediately help**.



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(psyc.com)



Warning signs children subjected to abuse, violence, drugs and mental illness

Behavior	Physiological	Emotional	Cognitive
Aggression	Insomnia	Anxiety	Poor school performance
Quite and closed	Endocrine stress response (hormonal responses)	Depression	Language problems
Acting out / unrestrained behaviour	Eating disorders	Unrest	Speech problems
Low impulse control	Psychosomatic symptoms	Low self-esteem	Writing problems
Self harming	Bedwetting	Anger issues	Mentalization (Understanding mental state of one self or others)
Motoric problems	Low activation threshold	PTSD-symptoms or CPTSD	Problems with keeping attention
Subcultural affiliation	Vegetative symptoms	Attachment disorder (difficulties relating to others)	Issues with problem solving
Drugs/Crime	Stress/Activation	Affect lability (tendency to experience strong and variable emotions)	Social skills

(Source: Didrik Hægeland – Frikurs 2017)



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Respos

- **Report suspected child abuse immediately.** As long as you have a sufficient reason to make a report, you are legally bound to report the incident. Be sure to give the person or agency you make the report to as much information as possible.
- **Do not act shocked or disgusted if a child reveals something about his or her abuse to you.** Children are inclined to think that you are responding that way because of them, which can have a major impact on their healing and recovery.
- **Be supportive in your response and let the child know it is not his or her fault.** Also remember that you can't promise not to tell since you're legally required to report any suspicion. *The Crisis Manual for Early Childhood Teachers* suggests the following response: 'I'm glad you told me. You did the right thing. I'm sorry this happened to you.'
- **Make sure children who are abused have plenty of ways to express themselves.** Drawing, painting, and writing are all excellent creative outlets for children to express their thoughts and feelings about what happened to them.
- **Treat all children with kindness, respect, and empathy.** This will help you build positive relationships with children and will also show abused children that a person does not have to use violence or humiliation in their interactions with others.





Warning signs of radicalization

Outward appearance	Online behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Becoming increasingly argumentative• Refusing to listen to different points of view• Unwilling to engage with children who are different• Becoming abusive to children who are different• Embracing conspiracy theories• Feeling persecuted• Changing friends and appearance• Distancing themselves from old friends• No longer doing things they used to enjoy• Converting to a new religion• Being secretive and reluctant to discuss their whereabouts• Sympathetic to extremist ideologies and group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing online identity• Having more than one online identity• Spending a lot of time online or on the phone• Accessing extremist online content• Joining or trying to join an extremist organisation





Response

- Recognizing the limited impact of youth work in the wider context, contact relevant institutions for guidance
- Adopting a holistic approach
- Developing peer-horizontal and trust-based relations with young people
- Building partnerships with other community actors
- Empowering young people – developing their competences
- Providing young people with alternatives and role models
- Dealing explicitly with messages inciting to violence and hate speech





Generic prevention targets all young people in an indirect way, by equipping them with life skills which contribute to their democratic resilience and thus strengthening their democratic values.

- Be the mediators and facilitators when discussing difficult topics or topics they are not familiar with
- Discuss questions of meaning with young people in a safe environment
- Dare to discuss taboo topics
- Know the trends, dare to confront them, tune in to young people's reality
- Enable young people to understand human rights and democratic values in practice
- Be aware of their values and implicit identity. Assess their own ability for self-reflection, critical thinking and emotional resilience
- Encourage intercultural and inter-faith discussions which underscore common values
- Make best use of existing training opportunities on processes of violent radicalisation
- Provide positive narratives to counter extremist ideologies
- Inform young people of public anti-discriminatory networks





A swiss army knife



- A good tool to have in most situations
- Can often be used to fix minor problems
- Can fix things until you to get better and more suited tools
- Is not a very good tool to use in advanced surgery





Thank you!



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What kind of situations do we need to prepare for as youth workers, and how prepared are we?

Do we know our own limitations, and are we aware of and use the support structures around us?

How do we deal with the youth worker “swiss army knife”-syndrome, one tool to fix everything?

How can we safeguard our self in difficult situations?

