

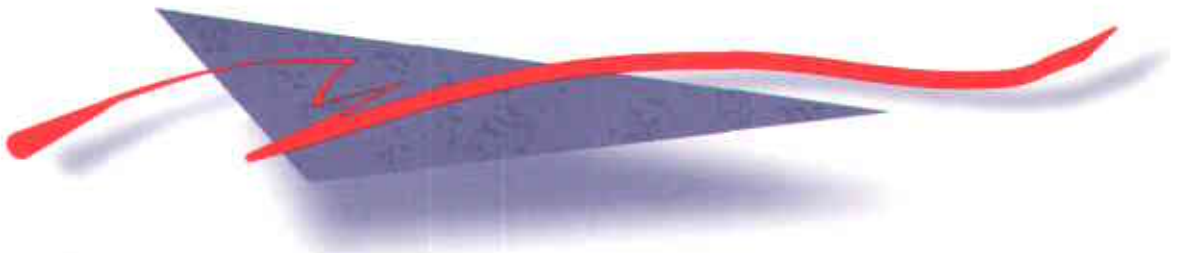


**Young
People
Creating
Community
Change**



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Young People Creating Community Change



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Introduction

This workbook is for young people who want to create community change. It is based on the belief that you have a right to participate, a responsibility to serve, and resources to offer the community.

We have tried to provide practical tools for achieving change. Inside, for example, you'll find helpful step-by-step ways to bring people together, set goals and priorities, develop action plans, strengthen diversity, and build support. You can take these steps in sequence from cover to cover, or you can go directly to the ones most relevant to your present situation. If you start this workbook with ideas in mind, and finish with plans in hand, our purpose will be served.

4 Because each person learns in a different way, this workbook features a variety of learning activities, with information on successful programs, individual instructions, and small group exercises, as well as hands-on materials for problem solving and program planning. You can use these activities as an individual, with a small group of people, or with several groups in a training workshop. This workbook is meant to be used.

Young people can create community change. We hope that the following pages will be helpful, but we also know that change does not come from books. It comes from people like you!

How To Use This Book



This symbol means there is something to think about



This symbol means there is something to distribute



This symbol means there is something to discuss in a group



This symbol means there is something to make copies of before writing

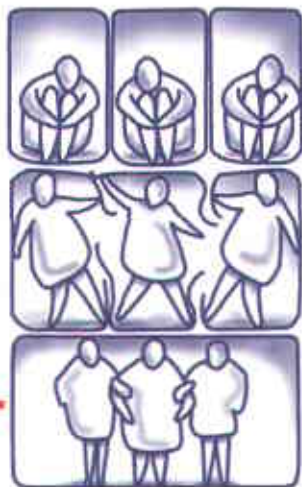
What Is Community Change?

Community change is when people join together and take action at the community level. It can refer to any of the following:

- Solving a community problem;
- Organizing an action group;
- Planning a local program;
- Involving people in decisions that affect their lives.

Efforts to create change are different from one area to another. But, together, they show that (1) community is a unit of solution, (2) change is possible, and (3) people can participate actively in the process.

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What do you see happening in the picture?
What are the people doing?
How does this picture relate to community change?



Young People Can Create Change!

Young people are solving problems and creating change, with a growing record of accomplishments. Here are some examples:

- Indianapolis youth are assessing needs and planning community improvement;
- Minneapolis youth are reaching out to gangs and challenging the forces of poverty;
- Detroit youth are serving meals in soup kitchens;
- New York youth are rehabilitating housing for homeless families;
- Selma youth are organizing against racial discrimination in the schools;
- Albuquerque youth are protesting against toxic wastes and environmental hazards;
- South Dakota youth are turning school classes into economic development; and
- Los Angeles youth are publishing their own citywide newspaper.

What is the name of a youth program that makes a difference in your community? What kinds of things do they do? What makes it stand out?



Characteristics of Successful Programs

Research shows that successful community youth programs have some of the following characteristics:

Strengthening Community

Young people are solving problems and planning programs at the community level.

Joining Together

Young people who join together in unity can accomplish more than individuals who act alone.

Getting Organized

Young people plan and organize to get things done.

Youth Participation

Young people actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

Developing Leadership

Young people develop new knowledge and practical skills through their involvement.

Believing in Change

Young people believe that change is possible and that they can make a difference.

Multicultural Collaboration

Young people recognize their differences while increasing their collaboration.

Adults as Allies

Young people work with adults who help them to create real change.

Obstacles to Change

There are obstacles to increasing the involvement of youth in the community. You should expect them as a normal part of the process, and work to overcome them. These are some of the obstacles:

- Adults view youth as “problems” rather than as “resources.”
- Adults plan programs without involving youth in the process.
- Adults do not share their power with young people.
- Young people do not view themselves as a group that can create change.
- Young people may have good ideas, but are unsure how to implement them.
- Young people are not organized enough for real influence.

What are the obstacles to youth participation in your community?
How can they be overcome?



Dealing With Change

A major obstacle to young people creating community change can be *adultism* – the notion that adults are better than young people, and that they can control them without their agreement. The result is that adults may resist or oppose youth initiatives; and young people may question themselves, doubt their own abilities, and withdraw from participation.

You should (1) understand that adultism is an obstacle that pervades society, (2) recognize it when it arises, (3) challenge adults to deal with themselves, and (4) know that despite obstacles, young people can create change!

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Adults as Allies

Despite adultism, some adults work closely with young people and become powerful allies in creating community change.

Adults as allies recognize youth as valuable resources with a right to participate and responsibility to serve the community. They help bring people together, provide resources for activities, deal with bureaucracies, and overcome the obstacles. They respect your ideas, give group encouragement, and build mutual support.

Who is an adult in your community that young people accept as their ally? What kinds of things does he or she do? Who are some other potential adult allies, and how could you enlist their support?

Assessing Your Adults

1. How would you assess the adults who work most closely with your group? (Circle the correct answer)

Respect your ideas	Yes	No
Give group encouragement	Yes	No
Provide resources for activities	Yes	No
Listen carefully to everyone	Yes	No
Promote active participation	Yes	No
Deal with bureaucracies	Yes	No
Overcome the obstacles	Yes	No
Build community support	Yes	No
Encourage critical thinking	Yes	No

2. Check the items which you think need the most improvement.
3. Underline the ones you could start working on today.
4. Compare your answers with others in your group.

Starting With You!

Community change can start with you. You can take real problems, formulate some solutions, and organize with others to make a difference. You can take action immediately, but may build a stronger foundation by preparing yourself and developing your own theory of change first. Here are some questions to help you prepare:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- What do you think needs changing in the community?
- What are your strengths and limitations?
- What can you do to prepare yourself for creating community change?

Making Contacts

Community change can start with one person, but lasting change comes from people joining together, in solidarity.

Make contacts with a few other people who share your interests. Start by mentioning your own ideas, then listen carefully to their responses. Get acquainted and build relationships. These contacts are a source of support and a step toward creating change. Supportive people are all around you, if you want to see them in this way.

Bringing People Together

Bring people together for informal meetings to discuss what needs changing in the community, the root causes of problems, and the steps that would produce solutions.

These meetings are a way to share information, learn from one another, and build mutual support. Each person should take an active part in the discussion. Democratic dialogue is an awakening process that raises consciousness and builds confidence.



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“Two eyes see better than one.”

—Mauritanian proverb

Forming a Core Group



A core group is an informal group of individuals who share common concerns and work together over time. They are few in number and trust each other. They care about the community, want to improve it, and provide a source of support. Who is – or could be – a member of your core group?

Forming a Core Group

Write the names of some people who are – or could be – members of your core group:

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Convening the Group

Write the time, date, and place for a meeting of your core group:

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____



Assessing Community Strengths and Needs

What are the strengths and needs of your community? You may already have answers to this question, but what if the information is incomplete or people have different perspectives?

You can gather your own information! Young people often get information from adults who tell them what they need without involving them in the process. By assessing the needs of young people in this way, adults often emphasize their deficits rather than their strengths, and youth accept these negative definitions of themselves. However, when young people assess themselves, they can raise their consciousness and provide a basis for change.

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Assessing Your Community

Bring people together to discuss the following questions:

1. How would you describe your community?
2. What are its major strengths?
3. What needs to be changed?



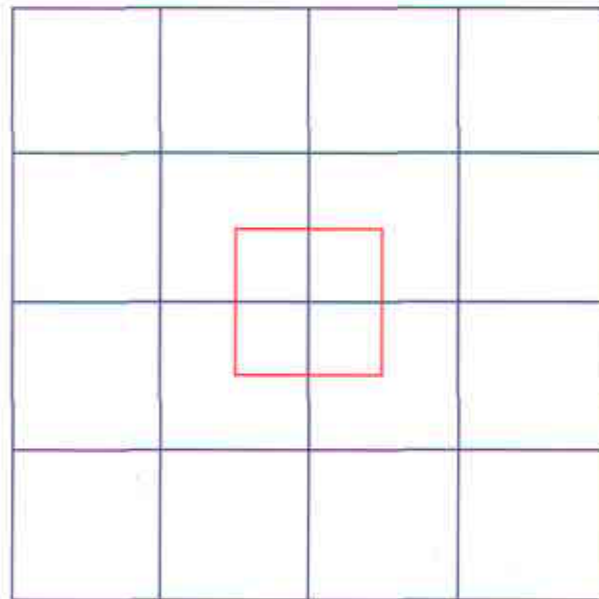


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Taking Another Look

1. How many squares do you see?
Write your answer here:
2. Compare your answer with other people.
3. Is there a single correct answer?
Or do different people see the same thing in different ways?
4. What are the lessons of this puzzle for assessing the community? If people differ in their views of the same community, isn't it time for them to take another look?



From Julian S. Edgerton, *The Worry Game*
Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1953, p. 120

What Do You Want To Accomplish?

What, in the long haul, do you want to accomplish? What are the ultimate ends you seek?

“Goals” are broad statements of purpose, and describe what you want to accomplish over time. They express your values, show what you really care about, and provide direction for the actions you will take.

Young people – more than many other groups – benefit greatly from a discussion of their goals. Often the goals expressed by youth are the ones given to them by their parents, teachers, or adult authorities. These goals may be a form of adult caring, but they do not come from young people themselves. When young people set their own goals, it can awaken their spirit, strengthen their solidarity, and move them into action.

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Here are some examples of goals expressed by young people:

- “We believe that young people should have more power in the community.”
- “The youth coalition wants all young people to live in a safe environment.”
- “Our goal is to rebuild the neighborhood and help people who are homeless.”
- “We are trying to fight discrimination in the schools.”

Clear Goals are Vital

“Unity, commitment, and energy all grow strikingly in a group when there is a clear goal that all believe in.”

From: Ann Hope and Sally Timmel. Training for Transformation. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, p.102

What Do You Want To Accomplish?

In a few words, write your goal:



Goals – are broad statements of purpose.

Objectives – are statements of purpose that are specific and achievable in a period of time.

Tasks – are particular activities that can be put in order and scheduled on a timetable.

These three concepts – goals, objectives, and tasks – can be conceived as a “family” with relationships among them. Here are some examples:

Goal: We believe that young people should participate in the educational decisions of the community.

Objective: Three young people should annually serve as full voting members of the school board starting January.

Tasks:

Task 1: Make contact with John and Mrs. Smith.

Task 2: Schedule a small group meeting in February.

Task 3: Research the legal issues.

Task 4: Identify who has authority to make change.

Task 5: Speak with key people to get their support.

Task 6: Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper.

Task 7: Go to the school board and present a specific proposal.



Statements of Purpose

Write your goal, two objectives for the goal, and some tasks for each objective:

Goal:

Objective:

Task:

Task:

Task:

Objective:

Task:

Task:

Task:
