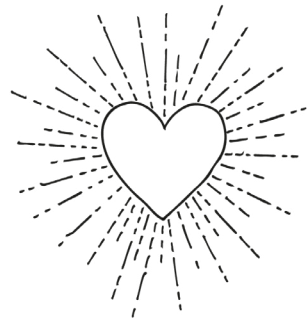
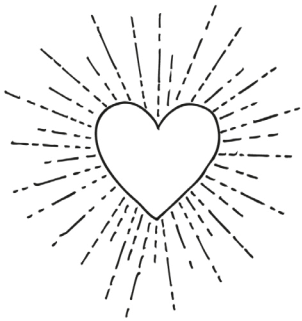
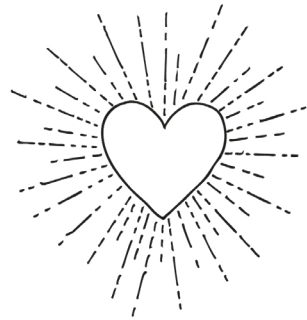
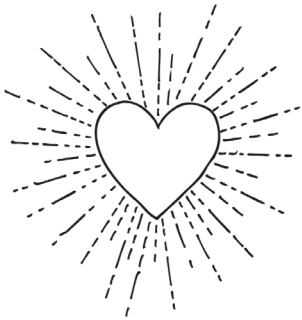
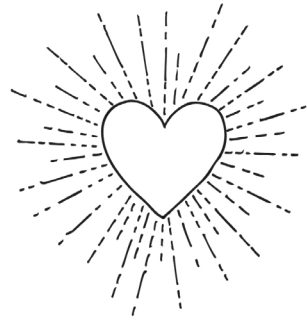
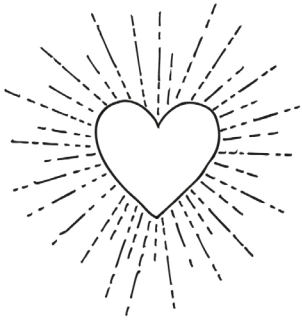
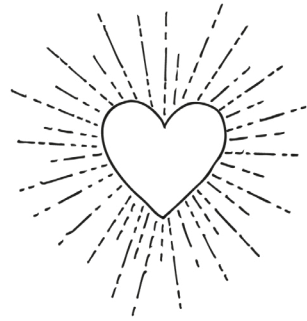
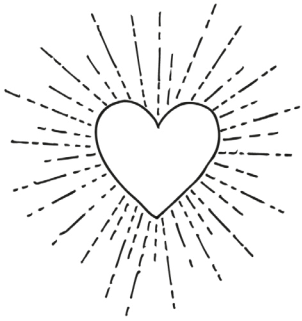


Let the light in



The Open-Hearted Eight

Québec 



I don't want to be protected from the past anymore.
I want someone to help me build the future.

Jasmine

Produced by

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Let the light in presents eight young people's dreams for rehabilitation services.

This project was carried out as part of the work surrounding the revision and renewal of the *Cadre de référence pour une pratique rigoureuse de l'intervention en réadaptation auprès des enfants, des jeunes et de leurs parents*.

This document, prepared by youth, aims to clarify terminology and outline the principles of rehabilitation for young people in a Rehabilitation Center for Youth with Adjustment Difficulties (CRJDA). The original wording used by the youth has been retained to preserve authenticity.

The Open-Hearted Eight

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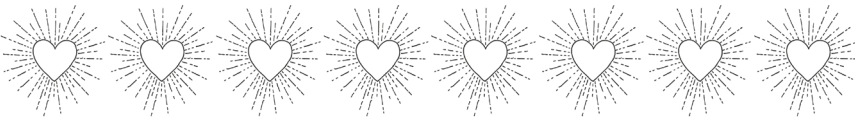
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OUR DREAM FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES

Our dream for rehabilitation services is that the Director of Youth Protection (DYP), through its intervention staff, will treat us like a good parent would.

A parent who is caring, fair and consistent toward all their children.

A parent who lets us explore our limits, whose door is always open, even when we make mistakes.

A parent who listens and who tries to understand what is really behind our behaviour.

A parent who gives us opportunities to have “normal” life experiences, develop our passions and broaden our horizons.

A parent who supports our independence, who gives us pocket money for our personal needs, who repairs the house when the roof leaks or when there is mold in the bathroom.

A parent who manages their own emotions, who puts their telephone aside and who takes the time to be fully present.

A parent who offers us support when we need it, who talks calmly with us instead of asking us to go and think on our own in a corner.

A parent who speaks a language we understand and who prepares young people for real adult life.

A parent who encourages us to develop and maintain meaningful relationships, who lets us call a friend when things aren't going well.

A parent who lets their children be children.

Basically, our dream is that every young person receives the services they need in a healthy, normalizing and more humane environment.

The Open Hearted Eight

A WORD FROM LESLEY

As the national director of youth protection, one of my roles is to listen.

It is vital that I listen to children who are receiving youth protection services and make sure services truly meet their needs.

I must also listen to parents, case workers and network partners so that everyone works together in the best interests of young people and their families.

In the past few months, I embarked on a major project aimed at renewing youth rehabilitation services in Quebec.

With colleagues, I conducted a consultation with young people, parents, case workers and partners, in particular in the community.

The objective of the consultation was to draft a new common vision and clear guidelines for services, a dream that is both inspiring and promising for the future.

With the hope of mobilizing young people at every stage of our process, we mandated a group of eight teenagers placed in our services to translate the results of this initiative into their words.

In the document they are signing today, *The Open Hearted Eight* share their glimmers of hope for youth protection.

Inspired by their resilience and generosity, I decided to share my dream for rehabilitation services too.

I dream that all children in Quebec will be loved and have a family for life;

That every child will eat their fill, receive the support they need and grow up in an environment free of violence;

That children's rights will always be respected;

That all parents will receive the help they need in their communities so that they can meet the needs of their children effectively.

I know that some children do not always have this chance and for them:

I dream of a network made up of caring and loving adults; of significant people who believe in them and who will be there over time.

I dream that every young person, without exception, will have at least one adult in their life who truly loves them and believes in them.

I have another dream, so simple and so complicated at the same time, for those who have been hurt by life:

I dream that young people will be happy; that they can be children... laugh, have fun, make friends, misbehave, even make mistakes sometimes and have opportunities to learn, always under the warm and kindly gaze of adults who will support them and appreciate them for who they are.

Finally, I dream that every young person will reach their full potential, discover their talents, their value, their uniqueness and that they will allow themselves to dream in turn.

I would like to thank The Open Hearted Eight for their participation, transparency and creativity in this colossal project. Their thoughts and ideas will guide us as we move forward, I promise you.

Lesley

BECAUSE WORDS HAVE THE IMPORTANCE WE GIVE THEM

Alternative to placement

Find alternatives in the short term to placement in a youth centre, a home or whatever. We have to put ourselves in solution mode instead of seeing only one solution.

Anchoring

It means helping the young person build a solid foundation.

“Anchoring is like giving them stable roots so they can move forward in life without being afraid of falling.”

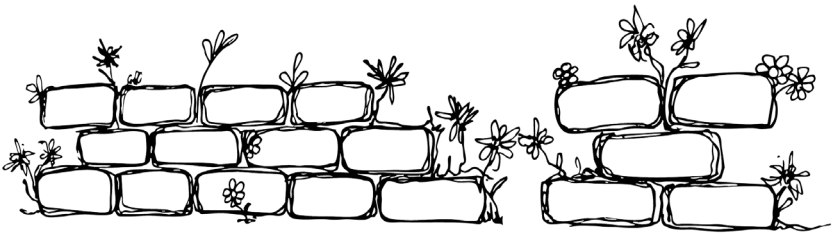
It means giving them support, security and confidence so they can build their future on a solid foundation.



Appropriate and safe environment

An appropriate and safe environment is a place designed for each young person's well-being. It is a space where needs are understood, differences respected and points of reference clear.

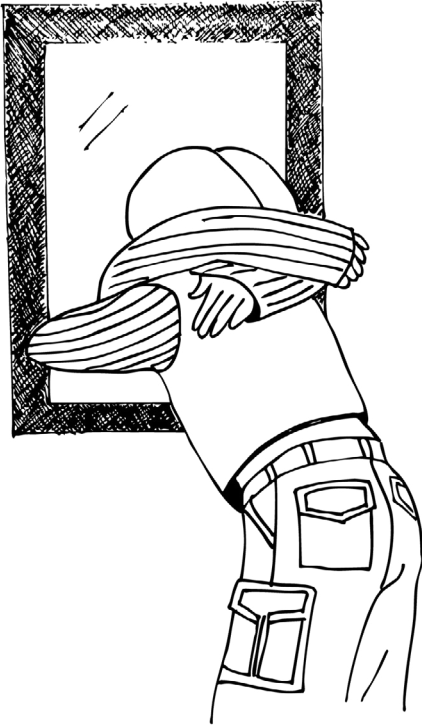
“There are walls that protect without confining, adults who watch over you without judging and routines that reassure without suffocating. It is a cocoon where you can settle, breathe and slowly regain confidence in yourself and others.”



Caring

Caring means seeing the young person with the heart before judging them. It means listening, understanding and helping without looking for perfection. To be caring is to give a gentle look, say a quiet word, make a reassuring gesture.

“It’s like a mirror: what is reflected in it depends on how you choose to see the other person.”



Coherent interventions

This is when everyone around the young person works in the same direction, with the same values and goals.

Coherence is when adults talk to one another, understand one another and do not contradict one another, so that the young person does not feel lost or caught between two worlds.

Collaboration

It means working together, listening and showing respect to one another.

True collaboration is when the young person also has a voice, when they are included in decisions that affect them.

“It’s about joining forces — those of the case workers, the family and the young person — to build a more stable and more humane future.”

Committed staff

Committed staff are staff who do not count hours, but smiles. They are men and women who believe in their mission, who get up every day to make a difference. Their commitment is seen in the gestures, the looks, the silences shared. They are there, really there, to support, protect, accompany with dignity and respect.

They are people who really want to help us, not just make money.

Continuity

Continuity means giving the young person a common thread in their life, even when everything changes around them.

It means making sure they are not constantly cut off from their points of reference, their connections or the people who matter to them. It also means showing that we are not giving up on them, even when situations become difficult.

It also means promoting the continuity of connections and services when placement ends so that the young person can keep their connections with their former living environment if they want to.

Culturally appropriate approaches

It means understanding where the young person comes from, what they have experienced and what is part of their identity. It also means taking the time to take an interest in their culture, origins and values to better help them understand themselves. When we acknowledge the young person's history, we show them that they have their place and that they are respected for who they are.

Development of the child

It is everything that helps a young person grow, not just in age, but also in heart, mind and confidence.

It means giving them the chance to get to know themselves, to express themselves and to feel capable.

It means accompanying them at their own pace, respecting their history and their needs, so that they can become the best version of themselves, without feeling rushed or judged.

“It means being there for them, supporting them as they develop so that they become who they want to be.”

Empowerment

Empowerment means helping the young person to become an actor in their life again. It means giving them the tools, the guidance, the resources to make choices, to take action, to build their future. It means believing in their abilities even when they no longer believe in them. It means helping them become independent, with trust and respect.

Exceptional intervention¹

An exceptional intervention is an urgent, rare, but necessary response. It means acting quickly, with discernment, when the young person's safety or well-being is at stake. These interventions are outside the usual framework, but are guided by a single priority: to protect.

They mobilize specific resources, well-considered decisions and rigorous coordination. Behind their exceptional nature, there is always a human intention: not to leave a young person alone in the face of danger and to offer them a way out, even in an emergency.

The DYP should be a measure of last resort, once the community, friends, family and school have been given the necessary tools and support to avoid placement.

**“The DYP should be the joker
in the pack of cards.”**

For this, the community network should play a bigger role with families. It could offer them advice, information and support. There should be more CLSCs, more support organizations and more information about what the DYP really is. If people really knew what it was, maybe they would act sooner.

¹ This refers to the State's intervention in the lives of families and placement in a rehabilitation centre for young people with adjustment difficulties (CRJDA).

Family integration of the young person

Family integration of the young person means repairing, strengthening or reinventing the relationship. It means allowing the young person to find a place in their family — whether biological, adoptive or chosen — and feel recognized, loved, supported. It takes time, attention and sometimes profound adjustments. It also means accompanying families on their own journey so that integrating the young person is possible, sincere and sustainable. Family integration is about believing that relationships can heal, that roots can be nurtured and that every young person deserves a home where they can grow up in safety.

Happiness

Happiness is not about having a perfect life, it's about finding little moments that make you feel good in spite of everything.

A shared laugh, a trusting look, a place where you feel at home.

“For a young person in care, happiness often means feeling that they matter to someone, that they have value and that even after storms, they have the right to hope.”

Hear young people's voices

Hearing young people's voices is much more than listening to what they are saying. It means acknowledging their experiences, their worldview, their dreams and their anger. It means giving them a place in decisions that affect them, including them in dialogues and valuing what they say as essential. Because every young person's voice is a light, a truth, a strength that deserves to be heard, respected and taken into account.

Humanize services

This means making them more humane, more normal and having fewer protocols. It is a more chill, more relaxed environment. Support that takes you by the hand, that is more normative, with appropriate and less clinical words.

Case workers who are not too strict, who do not spend their time putting you in the background. Professionals who offer you realistic measures (for example, if you are having suicidal thoughts) because isolation does not fix anything. When you have dark thoughts, but you are put in a room where you can't do anything, where you don't even have sheets, where you can't call someone to calm you down, it doesn't make you feel better.

Services closer to real life, less to do with managing risks, more like parenting. Risks should be managed like a good father. Work on relationships of trust, not with protective measures and clinical reactions to different situations. At the moment, not all case workers react the same way, some of them are good. Services should be tailored to each young person.

Independence

More freedom. More outings. Managing my own money. Going to external school instead of internal school because otherwise in the end I'm still inside the same walls, without any real contact with the outside.

Information

Information is the first step toward independence. It means giving young people, families and case workers the keys to understand, choose and act. Clear, accessible and transparent information helps overcome a lack of understanding, allay fears and build trust.

“It is also a fundamental right: the right to know what is going on, what is possible, what is at stake.”

To inform is to respect. It is recognizing that every person deserves to be informed, never kept in the dark.

Interdisciplinary approach

The interdisciplinary approach is the art of sharing perspectives in order to understand better and act better. It means bringing together care providers from different backgrounds — educators, psychologists, social workers, doctors — to build a comprehensive and coherent response to the young person’s needs. Everyone brings their expertise, but above all their readiness to listen and collaborate. This approach makes it possible not to fragment the young person’s experience, but to consider it in all its complexity. An interdisciplinary approach means working together, so that each young person is supported in all areas of their life.

Manage risks

Managing risks is the art of planning in order to protect more effectively. It is recognizing situations that could undermine a young person, anticipating them carefully and putting concrete measures in place to avoid or mitigate them.

It is active vigilance, constant reflection, a commitment to never let chance decide a child's fate. In youth centres, this means creating a safe environment, training teams, adapting interventions and always keeping in mind that every action counts.

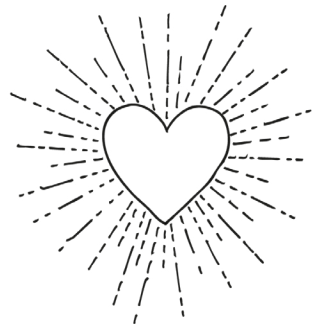
**“Managing risks means choosing caution
without giving up trust.”**

Meaningful connections

Meaningful connections are relationships that make a difference, that sustain, that transform. They are human connections that go beyond the day-to-day: an adult who believes in you, a friend who listens to you without judging you, a case worker who really sees you. These connections give meaning, stability and, often, a new direction.

They are not forced, they develop with time, trust and sincerity.

**“In a young person's journey, these connections are reference points,
anchors, sources of light in times of darkness.”**



Normalizing living environments

A normalizing living environment is a space where everyday life resembles that of any young person. It is a room that looks like a real room, shared meals, reassuring routines. There are also clear rules, human relationships, activities that make sense. This type of environment allows young people to rebuild their lives in a stable environment, to find their bearings and to live a life that is not defined only by the intervention. Normalizing means providing a calm space, a secure base where you can grow up differently.

“It means living like a normal young person my age.”

Participate

To participate is to be included, heard, valued. It means being able to give your opinion, make choices, take part in decisions that concern us. For a young person, participating means regaining power over their life, feeling they matter. It is also about learning to live together, to dialogue and to build. To participate is to grow with respect and recognition.

To support participation, the case worker must take time with the young person to find out what they really want. They must allow the young person to participate when they want to, prepare and support them so that they understand the process or they must understand what the young person wants so that they can represent them properly. The case worker must adjust to each child's needs and offer support based on what participating in decisions that concern them means for them.

Personalized services for each child

Offering personalized services to each child means refusing ready-made solutions. It means taking the time to understand their history, their needs, their strengths, their wounds. It means adapting interventions, rhythms, approaches so that they resonate with who they are. Each child is unique and deserves support that reflects who they are.

**“Personalizing means respecting, valuing,
believing that everyone deserves
a customized response.”**

Physical, psychological, emotional, social, sexual, cultural and identity dimensions

Taking the young person’s physical, psychological, emotional, social, sexual, cultural and identity dimensions into account means considering the person as a whole, in their entirety.

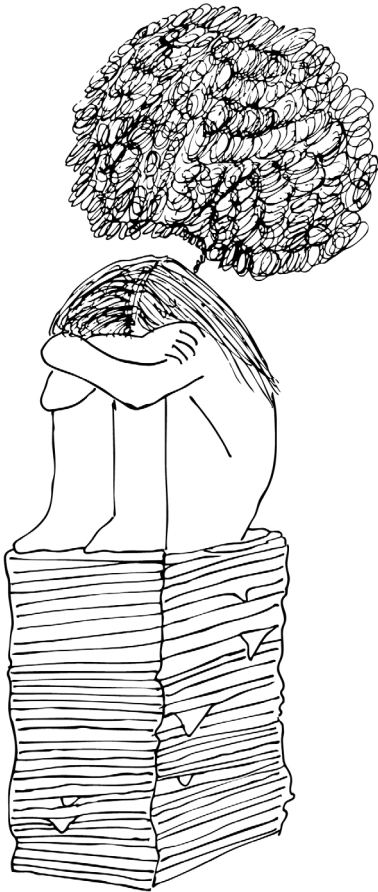
Everyone is different, everyone has their own beliefs that must be taken into consideration. Case workers must be open-minded, attentive and respectful of all the identities around them.

Positive and significant changes

These are steps forward that make sense.

Not necessarily big upheavals, but small gestures, decision or developments that really improve the young person's life.

A positive change is when you act in their interest, not just to fill out a file.



Prevention

Prevention means taking action before harm occurs. It means taking simple but powerful steps to avoid injuries, broken relationships and abuse. It means being attentive to signs, silences, fragilities.

“In youth centres, prevention means protecting without waiting, it means accompanying without rushing, it means believing that every young person deserves a future without violence, where they are not abandoned, where they are not forgotten.”

Promote active and continuous participation

Promoting active and continuous participation means inviting young people to be actors in their own lives, not just spectators. It means giving them a voice, but also the space for it to resonate. It means including them in decisions, projects, reflections and showing them that their opinion counts, always.

Continuous participation is trust that is built day after day, a relationship that takes root and independence that grows. It's believing that every young person has something to say, to do, to transform.

We must make the young person want to participate, not force them.

Protection

Protection is the fundamental right of every child. It is an invisible but strong net, woven by laws, actions, presences. To protect is to intervene when it is necessary, but also to prevent, to listen, to surround. It means saying to every young person: “You are safe here.” It is a promise, a duty and a shared responsibility.

Qualified professionals

Qualified professionals are the discreet but essential pillars of young people's daily lives. They have the skills, the knowledge, but above all the heart to intervene appropriately. Their training is sound, but their humanity is even more so. They know how to listen, assess, act and above all adapt. Their presence is reassuring, their expertise informative and their commitment transformative.

Quality services

A quality service is a service that listens, that adjusts, that evolves.

It is a trained, committed, caring team that acts with rigour and humanity. It is a place where young people feel safe, respected, considered.

“Quality is not only measured by procedures, but by sincere looks, by consistent actions, by lasting relationships. It means striving for excellence, not to stand out, but to serve better.”

Relationship of trust

What does this mean for me, as a case worker?

It means being able to develop a lasting relationship with the young person, not just being there for two or three weeks, but building a long-term connection. It's about becoming that case worker young people can trust.

Young people often find it hard to trust us, but it is essential to be able to develop this connection. It means staying involved in a young person's life, in the lives of those we have developed a positive relationship with, even if they change unit. It's about being real, authentic and meaningful.

Respect cultural identity

Respecting cultural identity means welcoming others in all their richness. It means recognizing their origins, their traditions, their language, their beliefs.

It means not imposing, but proposing. It means creating environments where every culture can be valued, shared and expressed.

“It means saying to each young person: ‘Your culture is a strength, not an obstacle’.”

Respect legislative frameworks

In short, it means respecting the law, not breaking it.

Respect the child’s dignity

To respect the child’s dignity is to see them as a whole, unique, valued person. It means never reducing them to their mistakes, their past, their wounds. It means speaking to them gently, accompanying them with respect and always preserving their integrity. Dignity is what’s left when everything is shaky — it needs to be protected like a treasure.

“Every young person deserves respect for their person, their privacy, their mind, their personal boundaries and their cultural roots.”

Respect young people's rights

Respecting young people's rights means respecting who they are, recognizing their value, their voice, their freedom. It means guaranteeing them access to education, health, safety and expression. It means never deciding for them without consulting them.

"It means offering them a space where their rights are not only written, but lived, every day."

Risk factors

Risk factors are like clouds that can cast shadows over a young person's path. They are elements — sometimes visible, sometimes invisible — that increase the chances of experiencing difficulties, feeling unsafe or losing your bearings. They can come from the environment, family history, mental health or isolation. Recognizing them means you are already starting to get them under control. Understanding them means dealing with them more effectively. And countering them means offering safer, gentler, fairer paths.

Safety

Safety is much more than the absence of danger. It is a deep feeling of being protected, listened to, respected. It is knowing that you can be yourself without fear, that you can speak without being judged, that you can cry without being rejected.

In a youth centre, safety is the basis of everything: it allows the young person to open up, to trust, to heal. It is a silent, but essential, promise. This is why it would be important to restore a relationship of trust between young people and youth protection so that they can ask for help when they feel unsafe.

See the young person's potential

Seeing the young person's potential means seeing beyond their wounds, their mistakes, their silences. It means believing in what they can become, even when they no longer believe in it. It means telling them: "You have value. You have talents. You have a future." It means giving them opportunities to shine, to create, to succeed.

"Seeing their potential is to turn on a light in them — and help them keep it alive."

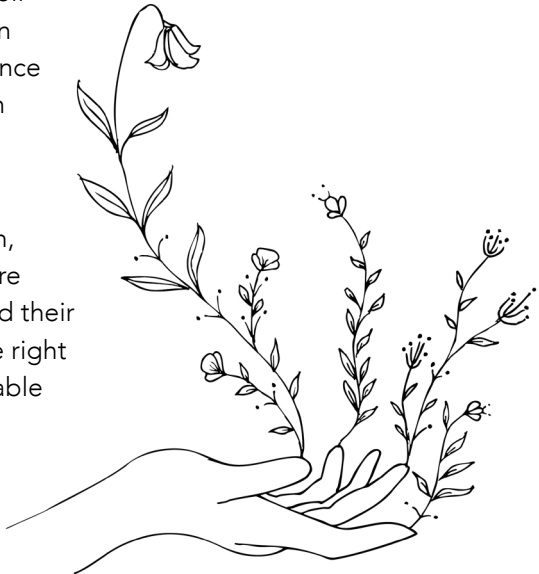
Social integration of the young person

Social integration of the young person is much more than being part of a group — it is a real sense of belonging, recognition, a place that is granted to them and that they can occupy fully.

It means allowing them to make connections, participate in community life, feel useful and valued. This involves simple actions: inviting them, listening to them, encouraging them. It also means access to activities, to school, to spaces where they can express themselves and develop.

Social integration is the soil in which the young person can thrive, regain confidence and build their future with others, not next to them.

To encourage the young person's social integration, it is necessary to make sure that the young person and their parents have received the right means and that they are able to put them in place to prevent them from repeating the same mistakes.



Stability

Stability is on several levels: relational stability, emotional stability, stability of staff, etc. Having stable staff means having educators, social workers (SWs) who stay instead of people who come and go every, three, four, five, six months. It's also about having stable rules.

“Stability as a whole is an ideal that is increasingly hard to achieve.”

Stay the course

Staying the course is about continuity in support, stability in connections, reliability in commitments. It means choosing to stay, even when the going gets tough. Keeping a young person in an environment, in a relationship, in a project, means believing in their ability to develop, to adapt, to heal. It also means recognizing that broken relationships can make them vulnerable and that consistency is sometimes the greatest support. Staying the course means saying: “I’m still here and I’m not going anywhere”.

To keep the young person in their family, priority should be given to getting the CLSC involved in order to support the family before sending in the DYP.

“The DYP’s intervention should be limited to situations where there is no longer any hope that things will improve.”

Strengthen family participation

To strengthen family participation, parents must be offered the same services as children.

Supervisory measures

“Sometimes, officers treat you like police officers who are up against the most dangerous criminals in the world.”

Supervisory measures are interventions intended to protect, manage and prevent risk situations. They are not there to punish, but for safety — to make sure the young person, other people and the environment remain in balance.

They can take different forms: increased supervision, temporary restrictions, increased support. What matters is that they are fair, explained and always re-evaluated. A well-thought-out supervisory measure is a firm, but open hand that guides without confining, that protects without breaking trust.

Before using a supervisory measure, case workers must put themselves in listening mode, try to understand the young person, give them space to let off steam and use supervisory measures only when there is a real danger for themselves or for others.

Sometimes, young people’s angry outbursts may also revive buried memories and trauma in other young people. It would be important for every living environment to have access to a rage room.

Support for parents

Instead of waiting for parents to make mistakes and then losing their children because we didn't help them, we have to support them directly as soon as we see they have a problem.

I think we all need our parents, a mom and a dad. Educators won't do! They're not our parents. Feck, they need help before it goes any further!

Support the child's development

Supporting the child's development means supporting them in all aspects of their growth: physical, emotional, social and intellectual. It means offering them a rich, safe, stimulating environment, where they can explore, learn, make mistakes, start over. It means believing in their abilities, even when they are still fragile, and reaching out to them so that they can move forward at their own pace.

"It means sowing seeds of confidence, self-esteem, curiosity and watering them every day with patience and kindness."

Support the development of a social network for the young person

Supporting the development of a social network for the young person means helping them build lasting, nurturing and supportive relationships. It means allowing them to meet positive people, to feel supported, recognized and understood. A strong social network is made up of friends, significant adults and committed case workers — a circle of trust that is there for them through ups and downs. It means reminding them that they are not alone and that they can count on others to move forward.

Tailor services to needs

Every child deserves to grow up in an environment where they feel safe, listened to and loved. Above all, the services offered should meet their need to be understood, to feel important, to have a voice and to be listened to when it comes to important decisions in their life.

Ideal services are services that offer warmth, stability and above all kindness, a case worker who really knows the child, who accompanies them step by step, however insignificant. A case worker who becomes a reassuring point of reference in their journey.

The child needs a space where their emotions are welcomed, where their strengths are recognized and where their dreams are encouraged. A child who receives appropriate services can regain confidence, build their future and believe that they deserve happiness.

“Basically, ideal services are services that give back to the child what they should never lose: safety, dignity and hope.”

Take back power

Taking back power is the moment when the young person stands up, when they decide, when they move forward.

It is the result of respectful support, a safe environment and a relationship of trust. They take back the reins, find their voice, affirm their place. It is a private, discreet, but tremendous victory.

In order for them to take back power, the young person must be involved in the assessment of the report and during follow-up meetings so that their opinion is taken into account. Their perception of changes in their parents' behaviour must be valued, their voice must be as important as that of the case worker or their family.

Transition to adulthood

To support the transition to adulthood, we must make sure that young people really have somewhere to go after they have been in the DYP's care. More available and trained case workers to help young adults, more workshops to develop skills in adult responsibilities: rent, taxes, CV, etc.

“For me, the transition to adulthood is the final transition between childhood and real life. The world is a jungle and at the moment the DYP does not prepare us enough!”

Understanding

“Understanding is not just about listening to what the young person is saying, it’s also hearing what they are not saying.”

It’s taking the time to find out their history, their fears, their wounds and their dreams.

Understanding is a bridge between two worlds: the adult’s world and the young person’s world.

For this, it is crucial that educators take the time to read the young person’s file before they meet them for the first time. It is important that they already have an idea of what they can work on with them.

Well-being

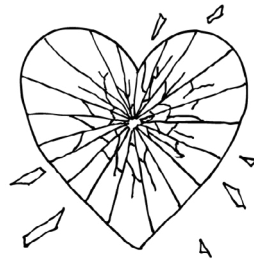
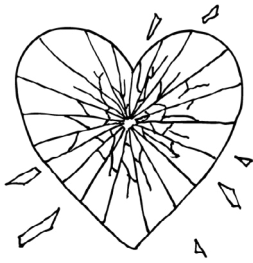
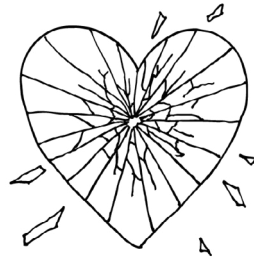
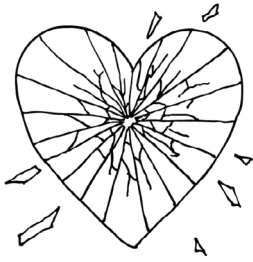
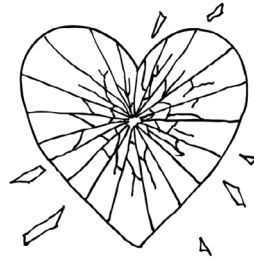
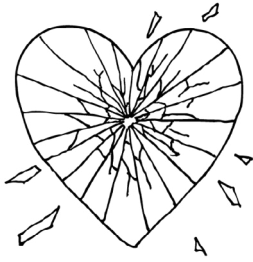
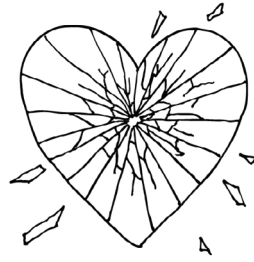
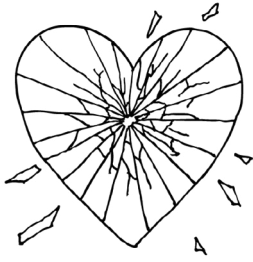
Well-being is when a young person feels at peace, both in their head and in their heart. It’s about feeling understood, listened to, respected and safe.

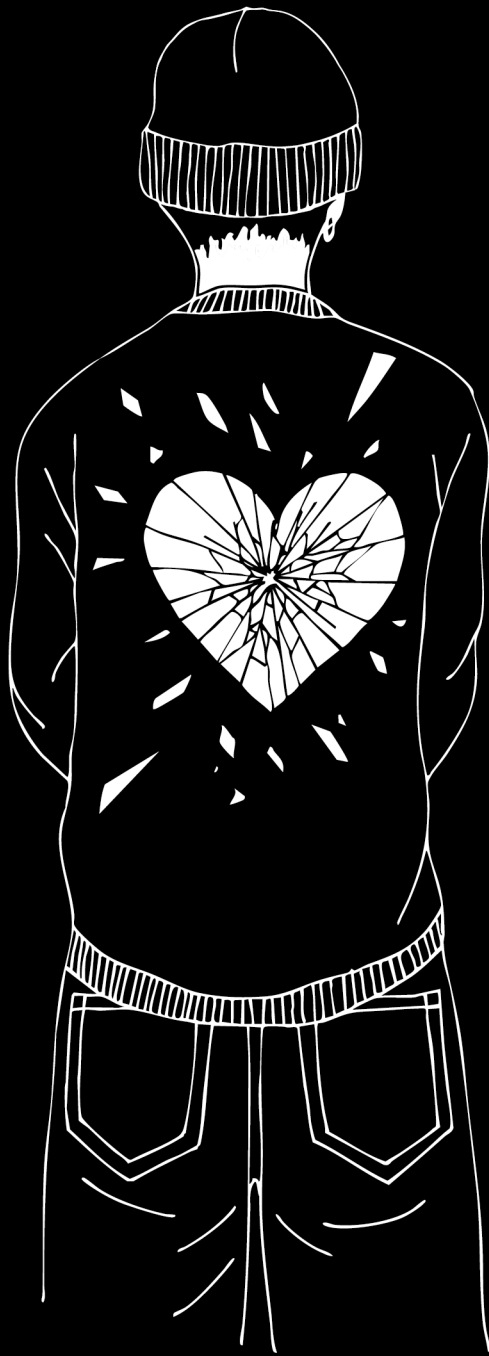
Well-being is more than the absence of problems: it’s when we feel that we have a place, that we can be ourselves without fear and that we have adults around us who really want us to be happy.

Humans are constantly evolving,
that's what makes us human.

Humans evolve, so does the DYP.

Iced





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