

**Resilience Based
Practice Framework**

YSAAS

YSAS is a community service organisation that is committed to social justice and creating the conditions in which young people, with their families and communities, can overcome and even be strengthened by adversity.

Artpiece: Alisha, F



Contents

Acknowledgement	2	We create the conditions for young people to access resources and opportunities that align with their needs and goals	36
About YSAS	3		
Introduction	6	We walk alongside young people as they pursue their goals.....	38
Our vision at YSAS	6	We help young people transition successfully from our care	40
Why are some young people at greater risk	7		
All behaviours have a function and a meaning	8		
The YSAS 'Resilience Based' Practice Framework	10	Core characteristics of the YSAS approach	42
Overview	12	Person centred	42
Domains of Need	14	Developmentally geared	44
Resources and opportunities	22	Relationship based	44
Key practices	26	Proactive and engaging	46
Our 'Resilience Based Practice' approach	30	Holistic and ecological	47
We position ourselves to respond at critical moments that can become turning points in young people's lives	31	Harm reduction focussed	48
We match our approach to how young people are orientated toward change	32	Family and community inclusive	48
Our care plans are based on the needs and preferences of young people and their families	34	Culturally sensitive	49
		Trauma responsive	49
		Strengths based	50
		Outcomes and impact	52
		How do we know that we are effective?	52
		YSAS Practice Guides	56

Acknowledgement

We live and work on the country of 'First Nations' peoples

YSAS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. They were the first to establish sovereign Nations in this country and that sovereignty has never been ceded.

We recognise and respect the inherent cultural strength and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their vast experience in caring for the social and emotional well-being of their community.

We are enriched by the continuing cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We pay respect to their Elders – past, present and future.

We support self-determination and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a right to self-determination and justice.

We are committed to learning from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations on how best to support them in fighting for justice and creating better futures for First Nations communities.

We accept the truth of this country's colonial past and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience systemic racism in Australia today.

We remember that the authorities in Australia used force to steal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, inflicting an overwhelming trauma that current and future generations have to find ways to live with. We do our best to confront this shameful truth and listen to the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By listening and learning we start to comprehend how devastating it is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to witness the over representation of their children and young people in the out-of-home care and justice systems across the country.



About YSAS

YSAS is a community service organisation that is committed to social justice and creating the conditions in which young people, with their families and communities, can overcome and even be strengthened by adversity.

YSAS programs and services are designed specifically to meet the needs of young people who are, or who are at risk of, experiencing substance use related harm, difficulties with mental health and criminal justice system involvement.

We are equipped to assist young people, families and communities experiencing serious problems, but also intervene as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating and becoming entrenched.

YSAS provides practical support and evidence-based clinical care through outreach and care co-ordination, residential programs and a range community-based services. Across Victoria, we also collaborate with other service providers in the best interests of the young people, families and communities that we serve.



Our Commitments

- **Inclusion and equity for people of all backgrounds and identities:** We understand that every person is unique. We are proactive in ensuring that young people of all backgrounds and identities are welcomed and have the opportunity to participate equally in the life of our organisation and the communities in which we provide our services. While it is not possible to fully comprehend the complexity of all human experience, we learn so much through including and building relationships of mutual trust and respect with First Nations peoples, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ folk, people of colour, people from various cultural backgrounds and those who have particular religious affiliations and beliefs. We are also committed to gender equity.
- **Co-creating solutions and outcomes with young people and families:** YSAS adopts a service user partnership/ co-creation approach. This is characterised by shared power and participation in decision making at all levels, including the individual, organisational and systemic. The 'lived experience' and 'living experience' of young people and families is diverse and their knowledge and expertise of what matters and works best for them and their peers is valued highly alongside other forms of knowledge and expertise.
- **Using the best available evidence on 'what works' to inform our practice:** We are committed to implementing practice approaches and delivering interventions that work to produce positive outcomes for young people and families. This is achieved by braiding together evidence that is derived from a number of sources including:
 - the lived and living experience and expertise of young people and families
 - practitioner knowledge and judgement
 - findings from high quality research
- **Learning and evolving:** We ensure that our practice is effective in response to the changing social conditions in which young people develop. We strive to create a culture that supports and reinforces the learning and development of our practitioners. This involves creating the conditions where practitioners feel enabled and supported to ask questions, raise concerns, express opinions and challenge each other to both uphold the organisation's values, and fulfil our purpose.

**See Practice Guide 10:
Co-creating solutions and outcomes
with young people and families**



Introduction

Our vision at YSAS

To thrive, young people require the space and support to learn how to meet their needs and adapt to overcome the challenges that arise as they develop.

Success in navigating the transition to adulthood is determined not only by a young person's motivation and emerging capabilities, but also the capacity of their family, community and culture to provide meaningful guidance and vital resources when they are needed most.

Unfortunately, the resources and opportunities that support the efforts of young people, families and communities to live well are not distributed equally in our society.

There are overarching influences that shape both the availability and/or the quality of the resources young people need to develop and thrive, including:

- Socio-economic advantage or disadvantage
- Systems of power and privilege with historical and cultural dimensions

First Nations peoples, refugees and people seeking asylum, people of colour, people whose cultural and/or religious affiliations are in the minority, LGBTIQ+ folk and people with disabilities all contend with both overt and unconscious prejudice that constrains how health enhancing resources and opportunities are made available for them.

Further, where young people must come to terms with more than one aspect of their background and/or identity being marginalised and discriminated against, access to meaningful and helpful resources and opportunities becomes even more complicated. We seek to learn from the experience of these young people, families and communities and the knowledge they hold; to shape our practice so that they find it culturally safe and effective.

**See Practice Guide 4:
Intersectional practice**

**See Practice Guide 5:
Culturally inclusive practice**

In addition, it is also most often the children and young people who contend with the greatest adversities who are also without the most basic and necessary protections. We work with others involved in the care of young people who are growing up in these circumstances to ensure that the protective social scaffolding is in place to moderate their exposure to risk and to provide them with opportunities to develop well.

**See Practice Guide 16:
Youth AOD practice and
Out-of-Home Care**

Why are some young people at greater risk

There are a range of risk factors that predispose young people to poor mental health outcomes, alcohol and other drug problems and becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

These include:

- Exposure to racism, homophobia, transphobia and discrimination
- Intergenerational poverty and trauma
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including trauma stemming from abuse, neglect and exposure to violence
- Refugee and difficult resettlement experiences
- Learning difficulties and early school disconnection
- History of family attachment issues and conflict
- Highly reactive temperament and other hereditary factors

If these and other risk factors are not mitigated through the presence of protective factors and addressed in a meaningful way as a young person develops, they will present in the 'here and now' as stressors that exacerbate and perpetuate health and behaviour problems. These stressors are known as problem 'triggers' and 'drivers'.

Triggers and drivers become particularly influential in the development of problems and harmful behaviours when young people, families and communities do not have access to the resources and opportunities they require to support positive adaptation and coping.

Many families and young people are resourceful and creative in developing ways to cope, however the number and severity of the stressors confronting them can become overwhelming and contribute to harmful substance use, involvement with the criminal justice system, compromised mental health and entanglement in cycles of violence, abuse or trauma. These problems and experiences tend to interrelate with each other and are often compounded by housing instability and unemployment.

The co-incidence and interrelationship of these problems creates complexity that most service systems cannot comprehend or respond to effectively. The result is that those who are most vulnerable and are carrying the greatest burden of health and social inequalities, fall through the gaps. Consequently, they are more likely to become even more disenfranchised as they struggle to access the assistance and resources that they need to be safe and live well.

At YSAS, our programs and services respond in culturally meaningful ways to the complex circumstances of each young person and family; taking full account of their strengths as well as the difficulties they contend with.

All behaviours have a function and a meaning

Through dialogue and shared experience, our practitioners come to know the reasons why young people engage in particular behaviours such as substance use. We recognise that all behaviours, even those that are associated with unwanted complications and harm, have a function and a meaning that needs to be understood, without young people and families feeling judged or blamed.

EXAMPLE

The function and meaning of substance use for young people

The reasons that young people might use substances could include seeking sensations or pleasure; alleviating boredom; satisfying curiosity; facilitating social bonding; attaining peer status; or as an escape or coping mechanism. Equally, substance use could be a form of rebellion or have a symbolic function that identifies young people with a particular peer group or 'scene'.

Young people who come to rely on substance use as a coping mechanism or form of escape often do so in response to life stressors, or underlying problems that they believe are insurmountable or irresolvable.

The efficacy of substance use as a coping strategy is confined to the present, because it tends to undermine the efforts of young people to deal with underlying problems or stressors over the longer term.

At times, young people use substances as a means of accessing alternative experiences in response to, or anticipation of, unpalatable or uncomfortable events and circumstances. This is known as reality swapping. This way of understanding substance use recognises that young people are active in managing their own lives and de-emphasises the role of pathology and deviance.

Even in cases when substance use is intentionally self-destructive, it is possible to recognise the agency of a young person and crucial to understand their reasons for taking such action.



The YSAS 'Resilience Based' Practice Framework

Resilience is the capacity of young people, families and communities to cope with, overcome and even be strengthened by adversity.

Resilience requires timely access to the right mix of resources and opportunities that enable people to meet their needs in ways that matter to them.

The Resilience Research Centre explains that '...resilience is the result of both successful navigation to resources and negotiation for resources to be provided in meaningful ways.'¹

1. <https://resilienceresearch.org/about-resilience/>



Overview

Resilience Based Practice is focussed on creating the conditions that enable young people and families to:

- Prevent harm.
- Meet their needs.
- Fulfil their aspirations.
- Deal effectively with life stressors that trigger and drive health and behaviour problems

The framework sets out six 'Domains of Need' that are integral to all young people's development:

- **Safety:** Protection from harm and the capacity to respond to crisis.
- **Stability:** Security and the capacity to meet basic needs
- **Agency:** Capacity to respond to challenges and capitalise on opportunities
- **Connections:** Helpful relationships with people, culture and places
- **Participation:** Engagement in activity that is socially and economically rewarding
- **Identity:** A coherent sense of self and one's place within their family and community

Young people and families require a range of meaningful 'Resources and Opportunities' that can be applied to meet these needs. The framework themes these resources and opportunities into four categories:

- **Environmental** resources and opportunities
- **Abilities** as a resource
- **Beliefs** as a resource
- **Culture** as a resource

Five 'Key Practices' are employed by our practitioners and within our programs to ensure young people and/or families can access and make the most of the resources and opportunities they require to meet their needs and achieve their goals.

Our practitioners act to:

- **Protect:** counter negative and harmful influences and protect existing resources and opportunities from being compromised
- **Provide:** make necessary resources and opportunities available
- **Connect:** link young people to necessary resources in their environment and within themselves
- **Develop:** teach young people and families skills and develop their capacity to achieve their goals and make the most of other resources and opportunities.
- **Advocate:** ensure that resources and opportunities are available to young people, families and communities in culturally meaningful ways that work for them

Legend

- Key Practices
- Resources and Opportunities
- Domains of Need



Domains of Need

To demonstrate resilience, all people require the capacity for to meet their needs in the following domains:

- **Safety:** Protection from harm and the capacity to respond to crisis
- **Stability:** Security and the capacity to meet basic needs
- **Agency:** Capacity to respond to challenges and capitalise on opportunities
- **Connections:** Helpful relationships with people, culture and places
- **Participation:** Engagement in activity that is socially and economically rewarding.
- **Identity:** A coherent sense of self and one's place within their family and community

The goals that young people work on with YSAS are invariably aligned to these six 'Domains of Need'.

In this section, a more detailed explanation of the six 'Domains of Need' is provided, including:

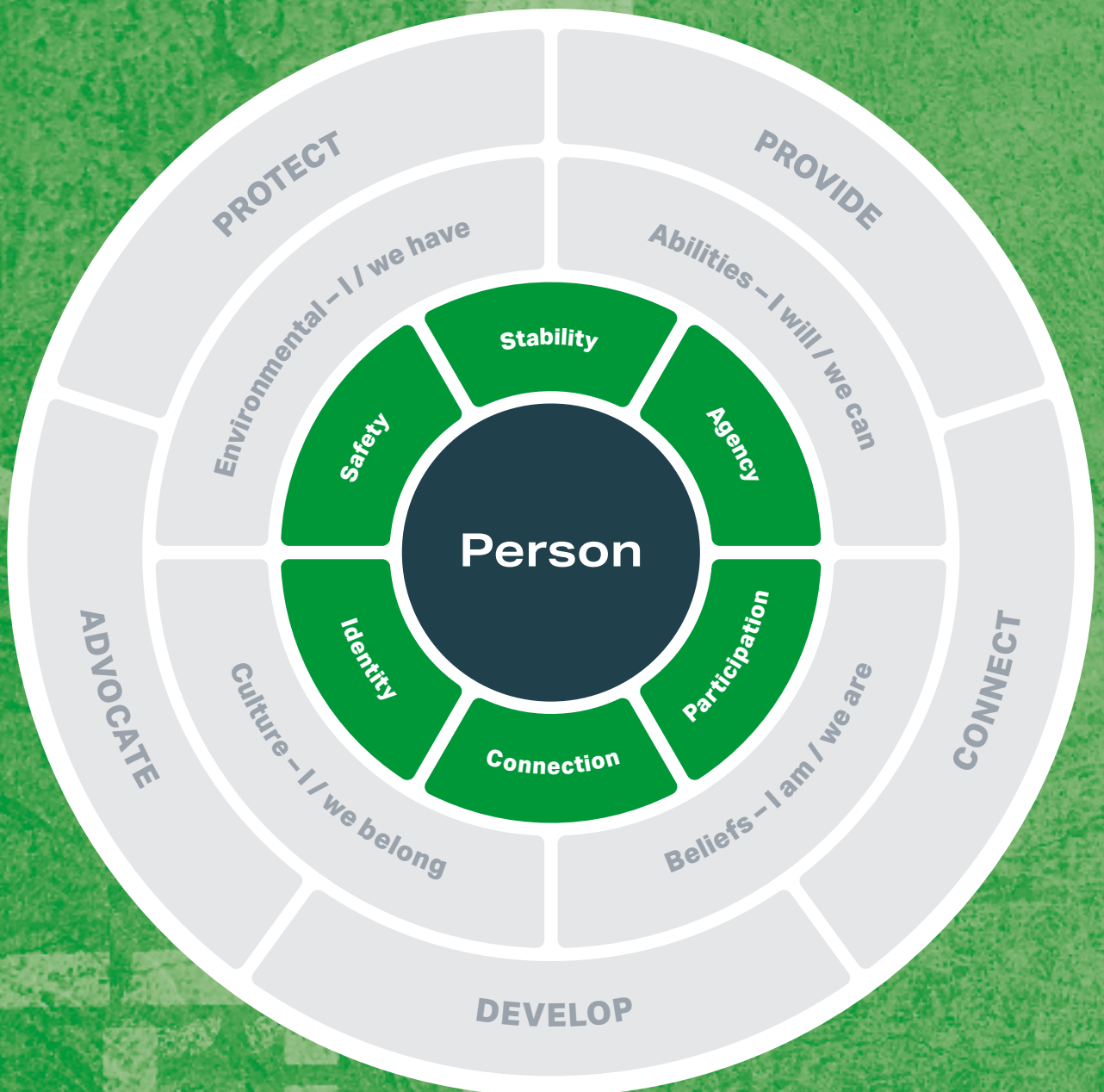
- Why achieving goals in each of the six 'Domains of Need' is crucial to the development and social and emotional well-being of young people and families
- How particular life stressors combined with a lack of resources and opportunities can undermine the capacity of young people and families to meet their needs in each domain

While the most influential stressors within each 'Domain of Need' is listed out separately, it is important to understand how stressors cluster together and interrelate in ways that create a negative snowballing effect in a young person's life. This can lead to young people and families experiencing a loss of control and it is at these times that they most often seek help or be open to receiving it.

Young people's journey with YSAS most often commences with goals that have an immediate or short-term focus on meeting needs for safety, stability and agency. In this way, 'psychosocial stability' forms the basis on which longer term developmental goals, focussed on helpful connections, social and economic participation and identity are set and pursued.

Legend

- Key Practices
- Resources and Opportunities
- Domains of Need



Safety

Protection from harm and the capacity to respond to crisis

Why is safety crucial?

Every person has a right to be physically, emotionally and culturally safe. The Government has an obligation to protect children and young people and to act in their best interests.

Parents, carers and loved ones are instrumental in providing children and young people with an enduring and reliable source of support and protection from harm. Typically, the degree to which parents and carers regulate young people's exposure to risk diminishes as their loved one matures and become more capable of looking after their own interests.

Cultural connections and mutual obligation within families and communities can also regulate risk for children, young people and families and make their lives safer.

Stressors that compromise the safety of young people and families

The following stressors compromise the safety of young people and families by exposing them to harm and at the same time undermining their capacity to respond effectively to crisis:

- Exposure to racism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination
- Inadequate regulation of exposure to risk
- Exposure to exploitation
- Exposure to violence (including family and gender-based violence)
- Urge for release and escape

What is the impact on young people and families?

Without regulation, the physical and emotional safety of young people is threatened, particularly when those responsible for their care do not have the capacity to provide adequate protection and guidance. Some young people seek protection and belonging through relationships with others who have a motive to exploit them. Risky substance use and crime is often implicated in these relationships.

Where young people and families do not have access to the support and resources to find helpful solutions to problems, crisis often results and safety is compromised. This can turn young people to substance use and other potentially risky behaviours to find release and relief from feeling frustrated, powerless, depressed and anxious.

Where crisis is not resolved or is experienced repeatedly, a young person's self-esteem, self-efficacy and world view can be impacted negatively and can lead to a sense of hopelessness and self-blame.

Stability

Security and the capacity to meet basic needs

Why is stability crucial?

Young people, particularly minors, have a right to expect those involved in their care will provide for them stable conditions in which to develop.

The experience of stability creates a sense of coherence whereby a young person might come to trust in the reliability of people and the availability of resources and life opportunities. This engenders optimism and increases the likelihood that young people will seek help when needed. Further, young people and families in stable circumstances are best positioned to participate meaningfully in community life; making the most of their opportunities and any support they require.

Stressors that undermine a sense of security and create instability

Uncertainty and a compromised sense of security creates instability. The following stressors undermine young people's capacity to meet basic needs and access reliable support:

- Housing instability
- Insufficient income to meet basic needs
- Comprised relationships with carers or those who can provide timely access to resources and support
- Social exclusion and lack of access to vital support services

What is the impact on young people and families?

At times, some young people find aspects of a more transient lifestyle exhilarating and even preferable. When it is not a choice, this is seldom the case.

Where stability and the associated sense of security is disrupted because young people and families cannot access the resources they require to be housed securely and meet basic needs, survival or getting by in the 'here and now' naturally takes precedence over development and working toward future aspirations. This can turn a young person to solutions that make them feel better in the here and now but also have harmful effects and a deleterious impact on their mental health over time.

Further, when not in stable circumstances, it is difficult for young people and families to maintain connection with helpful people and pro-social activities like participation in school or work. Young people and families also need stability to make the most of support when it is required.

Whilst many young people come to blame themselves for not having the means to create stable circumstances in which to live, we know it is in fact a systems failure and not their responsibility.

Agency

Capacity to respond to challenges and capitalise on opportunities

Why is agency crucial?

Agency is traditionally understood as a person's capacity to self-manage and exert sufficient influence over their circumstances so as to be able meet their needs and fulfil their potential. It can also be applied collectively by families and communities toward achieving common goals. Agency is not limitless and, like resilience more broadly, is contingent on the availability of useful resources and meaningful opportunities.

Young people's agency in gaining control over health and behaviour problems is strengthened by broadening their range of options for doing so. For example, substances can be used to have 'agency' over emotional distressing. Other options such as medication, emotional regulation skills and/or timely support from understanding family members can provide young people with alternative solutions.

Stressors that can constrain agency

- Distressing emotional, psychological and physical states that overwhelm coping resources (i.e trauma symptoms, chronic pain, complicated grief, etc.)
- Multiple interrelated problems co-occurring
- Untreated symptoms of mental health conditions
- Low self-esteem and self-efficacy (a sense of helplessness)
- Internalised stigma (self-blame and self-loathing)
- Unfair discrimination and social exclusion

What is the impact on young people and families?

Where young people do not have access to safe and effective ways of managing distress associated with trauma, chronic pain, complicated grief and symptoms of mental health conditions, it is understandable that they would seek their own solutions to make themselves feel better in some way.

These self-designed solutions, including substance use and self-injury, may provide immediate relief but at the same time can have harmful consequences for young people and others. Also, when not addressed effectively, these distressing states can have a negative impact on young people's social and emotional well-being, increase potential suicidality and contribute to aggressive behaviour.

Problems are compounded where young people and those involved in their care cannot access services that are equipped to respond to the complexity associated with multiple, concurrent and interrelated problems. This can lead to further marginalisation from schools and other community supports, creating the conditions for involvement in illegal, and at times, antisocial activity.

The stigma associated with being marginalised and socially excluded, particularly when it is the result of discrimination, can be internalised, damaging young people's self-concept and causing recurring feelings of shame, guilt and rage.

Connections

Helpful relationships with people, culture and places

Why are connections crucial?

All people want to value and be valued by people who know them well and have an ongoing commitment to their well-being. In particular, young people who are minors require caregivers who can regulate their experiences as they develop.

Relationships among young people, their families and communities are a vital source of mutual care and support that are further strengthened and made more meaningful by connection with culture. These connections protect and nurture young people's development and create a sense of security and belonging. Community connections also offer young people and families access to new resources and life opportunities that can result in improved social and health outcomes.

Stressors that interfere with helpful connections

Stressors that disconnect young people from culture, enabling places and helpful people:

- Dislocation from culture and place
- Family conflict
- Exposure to family and gender-based violence
- Relationships that reinforce the problem behavior
- Isolation (lack of 'bonding' relationships)
- Lack of access to 'bridging' relationships/ services that facilitate connections to new resources and life opportunities (work, etc.)
- Manipulative and controlling relationships

What is the impact on young people and families?

When family, community and cultural connections are ruptured, strained or unavailable, important scaffolding for young people's safety and development is lost.

While families and loved ones have a role in finding and reinforcing solutions, problems can also be compounded when attitudes are favourable to anti-social and risky behaviours and intensive substance use. Many young people who have accessed YSAS over time, first used substances within their families and communities and it is also common for them to describe their relationships with parents and caregivers as either conflicted or characterised by neglect and a lack of care. It is essential to understand the dynamics of these important relationships and recognise their positive or potentially positive aspects when also considering negative impacts.

Isolation and loneliness can be a driver of substance using behaviour and poor mental health. Even so, substance use and other risky behaviours can be reinforced by connection with peers, relations and partners.

Substances can also be implicated in the exploitation of young people. Substance use coercion can involve the use of substances as a way of seeking to subjugate, exploit and gain and maintain power and control of others in relationship contexts. This may involve providing or withholding substances in addition to blocking or restricting access to support.

Participation

Engagement in activity that is socially and economically rewarding

Why is participation crucial?

Young people with a sense of purpose and meaningful connection with socially valued and potentially economically rewarding activities such as school, training and work have a reason not to engage in substance use and/or anti-social behaviour as it could put their future prospects at risk.

A feature common among young people who had moved on from lifestyles involving substance dependence is their involvement in alternative pursuits that consumed them and gave them new personal meaning.

Participation also offers an opportunity for the development of competencies that when gained engender a sense of mastery and self-confidence, particularly when a young person's efforts and achievements are recognised and celebrated by significant others. Through participation in constructive activity, young people forge their identities and develop pro-social attitudes.

Stressors associated with a lack of meaningful participation

- Boredom
- Tenuous (or lack of) connection with school or a vocational pathway
- Lack of involvement in pro-social activity and opportunity for positive reinforcement

What is the impact on young people and families?

Every person needs something meaningful to do with their time. Social exclusion and discrimination disconnect young people from socially valued activities, leading to isolation, boredom and social drift. Naturally young people in these circumstances develop a sense of hopelessness that, when combined with an actual lack of attractive options for participation, often results in intensive substance use, compromised mental health and behaviours that bring young people into contact with the criminal justice system.

Disconnection from social institutions (schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, etc) also means missing crucial developmental experiences and opportunities to form new social connections and networks that can lead to new life opportunities and access to resources that promote wellness. This has a more profound impact when cultural connections are disrupted or lost.

Not being involved in conventional activities and experiences that most other young people of a similar age and stage participate in limits the ability of young people to gain the skills and capacities necessary for success in mainstream environments.

Identity

A coherent sense of self and one's place within family and community

Why is identity crucial?

There are several aspects of identity (cultural, gender, sexual, vocational, etc).

Growing up is about learning to understand and accept who you are and finding a place to belong and participate in community life as an adult.

Stressors that marginalise and undermine healthy identities

The following stressors undermine a young person's acceptance of all aspects of themselves and the likelihood of them experiencing validation and a sense of belonging:

- The impact of stigma and discrimination
- Struggles to accept one's sexual orientation and gender identity
- Low self-esteem and confidence
- Poor self-efficacy and a sense of hopelessness
- World view shaped by self-limiting schemas
- Anti-social attitudes

What is the impact on young people and families?

One or more dimensions of young people's identity can be marginalised and subject to discrimination in the form of racism, homophobia, transphobia, etc. Negative discrimination can occur within families, communities, faith-based groups and social institutions like schools and services. This can leave young people feeling worthless, isolated and unacceptable. This can impact profoundly on mental health and can lead to self-harm, suicidality and problems with substance use.

Many young people have had experiences that make them feel unworthy of care and lacking belief in their ability to make the most of opportunities. This creates a sense of hopelessness and can lead to further social drift and disconnection increasing the likelihood of mental health issues and substance use problems developing. The experience of feeling powerless and invalidated by others can result in young people compensating by finding status and shared identity through involvement in crime and other risky behaviours.

Resources and opportunities

Numerous studies have consistently defined a set of 'protective factors' that determine the capacity of young people to demonstrate resilience.

Resilience based practice synthesises the evidence on protective factors to identify four categories of 'Resources':

- **Environmental** resources and opportunities
- **Abilities** as a resource
- **Beliefs** as a resource
- **Culture** as a resource

With the right opportunity, young people, families and communities can draw on these 'resources' to meet their needs and live well. The same resources can also be applied to dealing effectively with the stressors that trigger and drive alcohol and other drug problems and behaviour that leads to unwanted contact with the criminal justice system; as well as improving young people's mental health.

Resources can have both individual and collective meaning. For example, a young person rich in resources like an understanding family, a stable home environment and strong cultural connections may have the sense individually that 'I have' the resources I need to cope. Equally, that person could feel collectively within their family or community that 'we have' the resources we need to cope and get through hard times together.

While in this section resources are categorised and listed out separately, we consider how they blend and interrelate to create the conditions in which young people can move beyond defensive coping to positive adaptation and thriving.

Understanding and respecting how culture creates and shapes meaning is central to our work

We recognise that culture is all encompassing and at the heart of everything for some young people, families and communities. Culture provides a life affirming connection to ancestors and traditions with profound meaning that have sustained life over countless generations.

At the same time, culture is a resource because it incorporates belief systems and practices that help people deal with expected and unexpected adversity, such as rituals for loss and mourning. The same applies for many religions.

Legend

- Key Practices
- Resources and Opportunities
- Domains of Need



Abilities as a resource (I/we can)

Living skills

- Self-care
- Health literacy and help seeking
- Resourcefulness
- Cultural competence
- Numeracy and literacy

Interpersonal skills

- Self and other awareness
- Communication skills
- Assertiveness skills
- Ability to find a balance between personal needs and the needs of others

Self-management skills

- Insight and acceptance
- Emotional regulation
- Impulse control
- Problem solving
- Ability to make sense of experiences

Personal attributes

- Talents
- Intelligence
- Concentration and attention
- Fitness and health
- Appearance
- Temperament

Environmental resources (I/we have)

Material resources

- Adequate source of legally derived income
- Secure housing
- Safe physical environments
- Food and clothing
- Information Technology
- Transportation

Social resources

- Opportunities for participation in:
 - Education, employment and training
 - Sport, recreation and leisure
 - Cultural activities
- Opportunities for connection to:
 - Social movements (political, artistic and creative, etc)
 - Religious and faith-based communities
 - Enabling places

People as a resource

- Protection, support and expectation provided through connections with:
 - Effective parents and caregivers
 - Competent, caring adults
 - Pro-social, competent peers and friends

Services as a resource

- Availability of accessible and useful health and community services:
 - Health care
 - Dental care
 - Mental health services
 - Alcohol and drug services
 - Homelessness services
 - Counselling and support services
 - Emergency services
 - Vocational services

Culture as a resource (I/we belong)

Kinship and community

- Connectedness to community with shared identity and responsibilities
- Bonds of reciprocal affection, support and care expressed through mutual obligations

Knowledge systems and beliefs

- Wisdom and guidance passed on by elders and community leaders
- Life-affirming cultural traditions, beliefs and stories that offer direction and give meaning to experiences

Cultural expression and continuity

- Practices and ceremony that connect with spirituality and ancestors
- Expression through cultural practices such as dance, art, songs that provide structure and meaning in life

Connection to country

- Connection to places of spiritual significance that sustain and support wellness
- Sense of belonging through connection with ancestors and history

Beliefs as a resource (I am/we are)

Self-esteem and acceptance:

- A belief in being worthy of support and opportunities for development
 - Acceptance of one's identity (individually and collectively)
- Motivation to invest in self-care

Pro-social outlook:

- Attitudes, interests and values that support participation in pro-social activities and mutually-beneficial relationships
- Motivation to invest in pro-social activities and relationships

Sense of purpose:

- The feeling that life has meaning and that an individual, family or community has a valuable contribution to make
- Motivation to invest effort in pursuing interests and making a valuable contribution to community life

Self-efficacy:

- An individual, family or community's belief in their ability to adapt, cope and achieve their goals
- Motivation to invest in developing abilities that promote social and economic participation and wellness

Sense of belonging:

- Feeling connected to something greater than oneself
- Knowing that you matter to others and they matter to you
- Motivation to make things better for oneself and others

Sense of security and capacity for hope:

- Feeling physically, emotionally and culturally safe
- Trust that useful resources and opportunities are available and reliable
- Motivation to plan for and work toward a better future

Key Practices

Aligning resources and opportunities with needs and goals.

Practitioners employ five 'key practices' to make the right mix of resources and opportunities available at critical moments so that young people can stabilise their circumstances and then take steps toward establishing a positive developmental pathway.

1. Protect

YSAS practitioners seek to:

- Protect beneficial resources that young people are connected with from being compromised
- Prevent helpful opportunities from being lost

Our practitioners are at times required to protect young people by directly countering negative and harmful influences that put their safety and well-being at risk. This will often involve working with carers and can be extended to emergency services and statutory authorities who have the capacity to intervene and act in a young person's best interests.

While there are many influences shaping young people's experiences, our practitioners address relationships that increase exposure to risk and actual harm. In particular, exploitative relationships with others that involve coercion and violence.

There are also cultural and at times religious considerations in how risk is understood and can best be moderated.

2. Provide

As a result of serious disadvantage, many of the young people, families and communities do not have access to the environmental resources they require to live well. With young people and families, practitioners identify the resources and opportunities that they will require to achieve their goals. Where necessary and possible, YSAS makes resources available while keeping a focus on enabling young people and families over time to develop their own means to access these resources.

YSAS practitioners and services are themselves resources. For example:

- Our Residential Services provide safe physical environments and in which young people can get well and develop
- Medical care, Psychiatry and psychological support are made available through our headspace centres and clinics

Legend

- **Key Practices**
- Resources and Opportunities
- Domains of Need



3. Connect

YSAS practitioners act as guides for young people, families and communities helping them locate and access the resources they need to achieve their goals and meet their needs. At times this involves raising awareness of the resources and opportunities that are available and explaining how to make the most of them. Often creating connections with other services and systems, involves navigation of complex processes and repeated effort before vital resources can be accessed.

Through participation in our programs and in pursuing their goals, young people and families also connect with abilities and beliefs that enable them to meet their needs and rise to any challenges they face.

Connection to cultural resources can also have a profoundly positive impact on the social and emotional well-being of families

4. Develop

Through our programs, YSAS practitioners create the conditions that foster the development of abilities and beliefs that can be applied by young people and families in dealing with difficult issues and meeting their needs. At times, new abilities need to be developed and at other times young people and families build on existing strengths. For example, this can involve:

- Learning better how to regulate emotions that can become overwhelming
- Developing the interpersonal skills required to negotiate for meaningful access to the resources and opportunities that are available within their communities

Young people and families decide on the focus for developmental activities and practitioners work at their pace.

YSAS also has a role, with our partners, collaborators and people with lived and living experience, to develop resources and open up opportunities in their communities.

5. Advocate

Young people and families cannot always access the resources and opportunities that they need. This can be because resources and opportunities are unavailable or that they are not made available in culturally safe and acceptable ways for the communities to which young people and families belong.

At times access to resources and opportunities are restricted or denied where young people and families are treated unfairly and/or discriminated against. YSAS is committed to tackling harmful stigma and unfair discrimination head on but always in ways that respect the wishes of young people and families and the circumstances in which they live.

Our practitioners advocate for vital resources like income support, housing, health care and education to be made available for young people and families in culturally safe and meaningful ways. This can involve working alongside young people and families as they endeavour to negotiate for access to a service or for better treatment within a service.

There are many manifestations of our advocacy in practice. To the best of our ability, it always includes the voice of the young people and families we serve. The advocacy of our practitioners locally is supported more broadly by our efforts to create fairer and more effective public policy and improved service system level responses for young people, families and communities encountering serious disadvantage.

Our Resilience Based Practice approach

Every YSAS practitioner understands that if they were subject to potentially overwhelming adversity and didn't have access to the resources needed to cope, that they could require professional assistance in the same way our young people and families do.

YSAS practitioners meet young people and families on their own terms and facilitate access to useful and culturally meaningful resources and opportunities that enable them to:

- Prevent harm
- Meet their needs
- Fulfil their aspirations
- Deal effectively with life stressors (the triggers and drivers of health and behaviour problems)

We seek to understand the unique reasons for each young person's actions. Even when their actions are associated with unwanted complications and harm, our practitioners do not demand that a young person change. Rather we help them realise that there are viable alternatives for meeting their needs that are more likely to result in better life outcomes.



We position ourselves to respond at critical moments that can become turning points in young people's lives

YSAS services and practitioners position themselves to respond to requests for assistance in a timely way and within 'windows of opportunity', where young people's desire to make positive life changes is the strongest.

Many young people and families seek help in times of crisis. Our practitioners intervene sensitively to disrupt the negative snowballing effect of the life stressors that cluster together to create crisis and put young people at ever increasing risk. Practical and useful guidance and support provided when it is needed most can create a turning point in the lives of young people and families.

When intervening in these 'critical and fateful' moments or 'windows of opportunity', practitioners seek to make the right mix of resources and opportunities available so that young people can stabilise their circumstances and then take steps toward establishing a positive developmental pathway.

**See Practice Guide 12:
Brief Intervention – Single
session consultation**

Given favourable conditions, even small changes in the functioning of young people and families can create a ripple effect that generates momentum for further change and development across a range of life domains.

**See Practice Guide 14:
Resilience based care planning**

We match our approach to how young people are orientated toward change

YSAS practice is inclusive and young person centred. We aim to connect with young people experiencing serious disadvantage and provide them with practical and useful assistance that prevents harm and improves their future prospects. We adapt our approach to be effective for:

- Young people who are not interested in behaviour change
- Young people who are thinking about changing but not ready to make changes.
- Young people who want to change but have not started
- Supporting young people to make changes and maintain them

Readiness to change behaviour is not a requirement for involvement in YSAS services, however our practitioners make it clear to young people that if they would like to change, it is possible.

See Practice Guide 13: Creating the conditions for positive change

For understandable reasons, some young people anticipate a bleak future and struggle to believe that change is possible. These young people are more likely to rely on the immediate relief or escape provided by use of psychoactive substances or involvement in other risky but exhilarating behaviours. Unfortunately, such 'here and now' solutions do not resolve the underlying drivers of problem behaviours and very often make the process of doing so more difficult.

Rather than compel our young people to change their behaviour when they are not interested, our practitioners invite them to set goals that contribute to their safety and bolster their social and emotional well-being.

Where young people have a goal to change, practitioners explore with them realistic alternatives to substance use and other risky behaviours as a way of meeting their needs and coping with stressors. With each young person and those involved in their care, this involves identifying the resources, opportunities and experiences that will address the identified triggers and drivers of the behaviour/s they are working toward changing. When young people connect well with these alternatives and find them rewarding, they have a tangible reason to continue to make and maintain the changes that are helping them build a more positive future.

Young people who believe in their own ability to effect change (self-efficacy) and also believe that the resources and opportunities are available to make this possible are more likely to be motivated to move beyond defensive coping and work towards goals that promote positive development.

The YSAS approach creates the conditions through which young people can cease or reduce engaging in harmful and problematic behaviours because they have a range of better options that meet their needs in ways that improve their safety, health and future prospects.



Our care plans are based on the needs and preferences of young people and their families

The majority of our work is guided by a 'shared plan' that is developed with young people and families and shaped to address what matters most to them.

Knowing that there is always some way to be of assistance, our practitioners convey a sense of optimism when formulating plans but do so respectfully, taking care not to minimise any problems or distress experienced by young people and families. While plans have a 'here and now' focus they are also developed in consideration of how young people and families interpret their past experiences and envisage their futures.

Practitioners adopt a 4-step approach to care planning that is informed by motivational interviewing and the commitment of YSAS to being 'person centred'.

There are steps that practitioners progress through with young people and, where appropriate families. These are:

Step 1: Engaging

- Engaging is a reciprocal process through which practitioners develop working relationships with young people and families that are based on mutual respect, empathy and trust.
- This creates the conditions for an honest exchange where young people and families feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences and what matters most to them.
- Once a working relationship is established, practitioners are proactive in maintaining engagement, constantly inviting feedback from young people and families on whether the relationship is respectful and plans are meeting their needs.

Step 2: Focussing

- Across the range of services that YSAS offers, practitioners have the capacity to shape the care they provide to the specific needs and preferences of young people and families seeking assistance.
- YSAS practitioners work at each young person's pace and focus on what matters most to them – in the context of their family and carer relationships and any cultural obligations.
- There can be more than one area of focus – there are some issues or problems that require urgent attention and others might be aspirational and addressed over the long term.

Step 3: Exploring and understanding

- Once practitioners are clear on what young people and families wish to focus on, they seek to evoke from them a more detailed explanation of why. This develops a deeper, shared understanding of how impactful and meaningful any associated issues or problems are for young people and families and provides insight into their motivation.
- Plans are future focussed, but practitioners also seek to understand how particular problems or issues in focus have emerged over time and what has worked for young people and families in the past to resolve them or lessen their impact.
- Once practitioners understand the nature and extent of any problems in focus and how they interrelate, further exploration is undertaken to understand the resources and opportunities available for young people and families and also those that would be further required to achieve their goals.

Step 4: Goal setting and planning

- When the focus of young people and families is identified and sufficiently understood, practitioners facilitate the setting of goals that form the basis of a care plan.
- Practitioners encourage young people and/or families to set goals that build on strengths, as well as those that require the acquisition and application of new resources.
- Practitioners take the time to be curious about and confirm each young person's motivation to enact the agreed plan.

In supporting young people to put their plans into action, practitioners position themselves to provide timely guidance and promote better problem solving and more realistic goal setting. This enables young people to learn from their experiences and can result in a reorienting of goals to make them clearer and more immediate.

Where a young person is observed to be losing motivation or a plan is not delivering results, it is reviewed to ascertain whether:

- The young person is sufficiently engaged
- The focus of the plan continues to be in sync with what matters most to the young person and/or their family or community
- Enough is understood about the meaning the young person and/or their family ascribes to their goals and the context in which they are being pursued

**See Practice Guide 14:
Resilience based care planning**

We create the conditions for young people to access resources and opportunities that align with their needs and goals

The capacity of each young person and family to meet their needs and achieve their goals is linked to the sheer range of stressors they have to contend with and the extent to which the resources and opportunities available to them are useful, culturally relevant and realistically able to be accessed.

The vehicles through which YSAS makes vital resources and opportunities available to are:

- Working relationships with practitioners from a range of professional disciplines.
- Intentionally structured practice environments in which young people can participate, and in some cases, live (e.g. residential programs)

Five 'Key Practices' are employed to ensure that young people and/or families have and can make the most of the resources and opportunities they require to achieve their goals and meet their needs. Our practitioners act to:

- **Protect** - Counter negative influences and protect existing resources from being compromised
- **Provide** - Make necessary resources available
- **Connect** - Link young people to necessary resources in their environment and within themselves
- **Develop** - Teach young person skills and develop their capacity to achieve their goals, and make the most of other resources
- **Advocate** - Ensure that resources are available to young people in culturally meaningful ways that work for them

Practitioners are also focussed on the interrelationship of resources and young people's experiences.

Resource boosters

Our care planning takes special account of the resources, that when accessed in a meaningful way, activate and enhance other resources that support young people's development and efforts to demonstrate resilience.

For example:

- A young person with excellent interpersonal skills can employ them to enhance connections with peers and teachers at school
- Connection to a positive school environment can provide opportunities for a young person to develop more mutually supportive relationships
- Through mutually supportive relationships a person can be introduced to new and rewarding pro-social activities

Harm boosters

Alternatively, some young people's experiences and life circumstances mean that the impact of their exposure to stressors is amplified. This is likely to be the result of:

- Relationships that increase exposure to risk and harmful experiences
- Exposure to risk environments that create contexts for harmful experiences
- Internalised stigma and self-limiting beliefs

In such cases, practitioners act to protect the young person. This often involves working with others who have the capacity to intervene and also keeping the young person connected to the most beneficial resources and opportunities available to them.

**See Practice Guide 8:
Setting limits to build resilience**

We walk alongside young people as they pursue their goals

Development is not an event, it is a journey and YSAS practitioners recognise that they are involved in young people's lives for a relatively brief period.

Through both dialogue and first-hand experience, we hope to understand how best to enable young people and families to achieve their goals.

YSAS practitioners do not direct young people and families nor do we seek to fix them. Rather, our practitioners act as guides, walking alongside young people and families, rendering practical assistance and helping them access the resources they need to reach their desired destination.

YSAS practitioners can only be effective as guides when they are empowered by young people, families and communities to take on this role.

Helping young people to stay on track

As guides, our practitioners are facilitators; assisting young people and families to explore the pros and cons associated with each potential route, to plot a course and to suggest resources that might be useful as the journey unfolds.

Progress is reviewed continually and there are times when young people and families decide to change direction and set new time frames for reaching their desired destination.

Practitioners encourage young people to 'do' for themselves as much as possible and position themselves to recognise their efforts, achievements and disappointments. Through offering honest feedback, delivered in a sensitive and timely manner, difficulties can be acknowledged and their impact on the journey understood. This helps the young person stay on track and learn from experience.

As guides, our practitioners encourage young people to break each journey down into achievable steps. Smaller and more frequent rewards and recognition for everyday achievement provides tangible evidence that challenges self-limiting beliefs, builds confidence and generates motivation to take on bigger challenges with potentially greater rewards.

WHY WOULD A YOUNG PERSON NEED A GUIDE?

Perhaps a young person has a particular destination in mind but is unsure of how to get there. Others have no thought of a destination but find themselves in environments or circumstances where they struggle to cope and need assistance just to get by.

Some young people are required to embark on journeys to destinations that others have chosen for them. These young people often have their own secret destinations in mind or plans to resist; but seldom do so when offered the choice to set their own direction.

ARE THERE PLACES THAT GUIDES WON'T GO WITH YOUNG PEOPLE?

Some paths that young people and families take compromise their safety and lead to an erosion of their social and emotional well-being. These are paths that our practitioners won't walk down with young people but we have a keen interest in understanding their motivation and keeping them safe.

We recognise that making decisions and learning to predict and manage consequences is essential for learning and self-discovery. As such, our practitioners seek to prepare each young person as best they can to manage any risks and prevent harm. Each young person is always welcome to re-join their journey with our practitioners, who can help them to make sense of and learn from their experiences in a way that builds their capacity to complete the journey at hand.

Providing support and refuge for young people and families if the going gets rough

As guides, our practitioners also position themselves to provide support and arrange refuge for young people and families if the going gets rough. The journeys of young people and families who have or are experiencing serious disadvantage are often subject to discrimination, exploitation and other pernicious influences that can stop them in their tracks or throw them off course. YSAS has capacity to ensure that young people's journeys are protected and nurtured in environments such as our Residential Services and Day Programs (as well as a range of other practice settings) that moderate exposure to external influences and risk.

Safety is always a consideration for our practitioners in their role as guide, but safe passage cannot always be guaranteed. All journeys, be they developmental or otherwise, involve risk. By staying in close proximity, our 'practitioner guides' have greater potential to make an accurate assessment of the hazards and risks each young person faces, together with their capacity to manage.

It is not unusual for young people to be relatively unaware of risks and to struggle with predicting and comprehending the logical consequences of their actions; others have a somewhat distorted view of their own capacity to manage stemming from a lack of information and life experience. We also recognise that some young people simply calculate risk differently and have their own motivations that are not shared by adults. That's why we do not make assumptions and take time to understand.

Our practitioners also realise that young people often need to hold on to vital defences and coping mechanisms even when they are associated with unintended, harmful consequences.

Recognising achievement

The young people and families that we care for, take the risks and do the work to make change possible in their own lives.

Serious disadvantage can be hard to overcome and YSAS practitioners are privileged to witness the struggles and achievements of each young person as they develop. Our practitioners also help families and others who are important to that young person to do the same.

Celebrating achievements and marking young people's progress, provides impetus for them and their loved ones to continue to invest in working towards a better future.

We help young people transition successfully from our care

From the time a young person first connects with YSAS, practitioners are working towards creating the conditions that will support their development and capacity for resilience after they transition from our care. In this way, practitioners hold a dual focus; both on addressing issues of immediate concern and at the same time considering what is required to help young people develop well over the long term – never losing sight of each young person’s journey.

We recognise that young people and families may also draw on their experience with YSAS, long after contact with us has ceased. Even so, young people and families are encouraged to seek help again if they face new challenges and need assistance.

YSAS practitioners:

**“Keep one eye on the present,
and the other on the path.”**



Core characteristics of the YSAS approach

Person centred

YSAS practice is centred on each young person in the context of their family and community/s. We consider their strengths and challenges, in light of their needs, preferences and aspirations. We seek to understand all aspects of their identity and the meaning that they ascribe to their cultural connections, religious affiliations and significant relationships. Within this context, we seek to understand any health or behavioural problems that young people contend with.

Being genuinely person centred means taking proactive measures to cater well for all young people that engage with YSAS services. We strive to create a 'right door' for those with unique developmental and cultural needs and who are a part of diverse communities.

Practitioners signal organisational identity safety for LGBTIQ+ young people and use inclusive language.

We ground our care planning in how each young person and family understands and ascribes meaning to the problems they encounter. We affirm their strengths and elicit their ideas about change.

The YSAS practitioner adopts a stance of 'not-knowing', meaning that they do not assume that they know what is best for a young person or family based on pre-conceived knowledge. Instead, knowledge is co-created out of conversation between the young person, the practitioner and at times their family or other supporters.

This counters a common assumption that practitioners will dictate what young people need and be in charge of designing responses. Many of the young people and families that YSAS provides services for, have been treated as a 'recipient of interventions' and offered little understanding or choice about either the services they received or how they were offered.

At YSAS, the way we deliver services for young people, families and communities is as important therapeutically as what we are delivering.

Our commitment to self-determination and empowerment means that in practice, young people and those with a stake in their lives, actively participate in the planning, actioning and reviewing of the care we provide for them.

Victoria Park

Platform 1 / City

Platform 2 / Mernda / Hurstbridge

Buses



Developmentally geared

Developmentally geared practice is sensitive to the ways in which the needs and characteristics of young people vary from those of children and adults; and the ways those needs and characteristics change over time as development progresses.

Merely being 'adolescent specific' does not guarantee developmentally appropriate service provision. YSAS is deliberate in employing strategies that are tailored to each young person's developmental stage. Further, YSAS programs and services aim to facilitate activity-based learning and development through 'guided experience'. We do not rely solely on 'talk-based' therapy.

YSAS practitioners hold a focus on the present as well as on the young person as a future adult. This means working with young people to address immediate issues and harms while all the time considering the impact of interventions and experiences on their long-term development and future prospects.

YSAS practitioners are sensitive to the developmental challenges and changes faced by all young people and seek to create the conditions where their many strengths and the strengths of their families and communities can be harnessed.

**See Practice Guide 1:
Developmentally geared practice**

Relationship based

Our person-centred care is delivered within the context of the working relationships that YSAS practitioners form with young people, families and communities.

The development of trust between practitioner and young person and those involved in the care, along with the provision of accessible and reliable support, have long been the cornerstones on which working relationships have been built at YSAS. There is considerable evidence that these 'working relationships' have inherent therapeutic value and predict better outcomes for young people.

Working relationships are useful as they can be adapted to suit a range of circumstances and timeframes. They also increase the likelihood that young people will retain connection with YSAS (and other) services and seek help when it is needed.

Working relationships have at least five major functions:

- 1. Building a sense of security:** A sense of personal and interpersonal safety or security is fostered when practitioners and services demonstrate to a young person that they will not be abandoned, irrespective of how challenging their behaviour may be (or how many times they do not live up to perceived expectations for change). The process of building trust in relationships can provide an alternative experience for many young people who have experienced a lifetime of neglect, abuse, rejection and social marginalisation. Working relationships can also be effective without contact or close proximity. The knowledge that a reliable practitioner or service can be accessed when the going gets tough can add to a young person's sense of security.
- 2. Teaching relationship and other life skills:** Constructive working relationships also provide a highly flexible vehicle for practitioners to model and teach a wide range of life skills. This includes healthy communication, maintenance of boundaries, and various interpersonal competencies that young people might not have previously had the opportunity to learn.
- 3. Acting as a vehicle for the delivery of therapeutic interventions:** Working relationships are also a vehicle for delivery of various therapeutic interventions that are targeted at enabling young people to meet their needs and achieve their goals.
- 4. Facilitating connections:** Young people can be supported to build helpful connections with social institutions (schools, sporting clubs, work) and derive benefit from the resources and life opportunities that arise from participating with others in these settings. The same applies to facilitating more helpful relationships for young people with their family and friendship networks. We also recognise the immense benefit that young people derive from deepening their connection with culture and country or places that nurture better social and emotional well-being.
- 5. Facilitating engagement with services:** A trusting relationship enables practitioners to facilitate meaningful engagement with a range of health and community services as needed.

**See Practice Guide 2:
Relationship based practice**

Proactive and engaging

YSAS practitioners are proactive in making connections with young people, families and communities encountering or at risk of encountering health and behaviour problems. We seek to make helpful services available to them in the easiest possible way and at the earliest possible time. We strive to engage with young people and families as problems are emerging and before they become entrenched.

YSAS practitioners are also assertive in connecting with, and providing safe and effective services for, young people of all identities and backgrounds including those:

- Who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- In 'Out-of-Home Care' (Child Protection clients)
- Experiencing housing instability
- From culturally diverse communities, particularly those with refugee and asylum seeker experiences
- Who are LGBTQIA+
- With underlying trauma that drives 'externalising behaviours' resulting in engagement with the criminal justice system and social exclusion

Our practitioners are aware that young people and families have broader social networks and are part of communities where others share similar experiences. We ensure that through these networks, young people, families and communities understand the nature of the services that YSAS and our partners offer, and how they can be accessed.

YSAS is committed to a 'no wrong door' approach, but we go further to create the 'right door' for young people of diverse identities and backgrounds.

Holistic and ecological

Our practice emphasises the total story of each young person, recognising the multiple, interrelated factors that either nurture or obstruct their capacity to meet challenges and develop well.

Our ecological and systemic approach focusses our practice on the connection between young people and their social world.

The resources and opportunities that young people require to develop well, are made available through webs of relationships embedded within a range of interconnected systems. Some are naturally occurring like family, religious and cultural systems and others are social service systems like education, primary health, mental health, justice, child protection, etc. Young people's wellbeing depends on fair treatment within these systems and conditions that promote trust and an exchange of resources.

When functioning well, social systems protect and foster young people's development. Alternatively, when social systems exclude young people and families or are not structured to meet their needs in ways that are safe and culturally inclusive, they can cause harm and contribute to marginalisation.

Our practitioners create local linkages to support viable cross sector collaboration and properly coordinated care for young people and families. YSAS recognises that practitioners with specialist expertise who have the capacity to diagnose and treat a range health and mental health conditions, are a vital resource for our young people and families and integral to an effective, holistic and comprehensive response to young people's needs.

Responsibility for the provision of comprehensive and coordinated care does not rest solely at the level of practitioners at the front line. YSAS is involved in policy development and service system planning with Government and other service providers, to create an authorising environment that enables smooth and effective collaboration in our practice.

Harm reduction focussed

We take care not to be moralistic or punitive when considering young people's behaviour, making our priority the impact of that behaviour on their safety, health and future prospects.

YSAS practitioners are open to exploring the beneficial and functional aspects of young people's substance use and other behaviours, as well as any associated dangerous practices and/or detrimental consequences. This communicates to young people a respect for their perspective and a preparedness to listen, thus maximising the potential for them to share detailed accounts of their behaviour and the contexts in which it occurs. YSAS practitioners can then collaborate with each young person in devising feasible, context sensitive harm reduction strategies that they are motivated to enact. This paves the way for further dialogue with young people around the meaning that substance use, and any other potentially harmful behaviour, has in their lives and adds to a YSAS practitioner's understanding of their particular motivations and goals.

We also consider and respond to potential harm for families, friends and the community as a whole. Further, our efforts to enable young people to stabilise their circumstances and prevent or restrict the deterioration of health and well-being are valued equally with work our practitioners undertake with young people that results in observable improvements.

**See Practice Guide 11:
Resilience based harm reduction**

Family and community inclusive

Young people's connections with family and the communities in which they live and participate, predate and will endure beyond their engagement with YSAS.

We include 'chosen families' who are groups of people considered to be family regardless of biological/legal definitions.

YSAS practitioners seek to include families as much as possible or is appropriate, as the evidence is clear that this increases the likelihood of positive and sustainable outcomes being achieved. We work to improve the ability and willingness of family members and supporters to emotionally and practically support their loved one through the ups and downs of life.

Our practitioners find common ground with families and carers in the interests of protecting their child's safety, health and future prospects. Whether or not families are functioning poorly, many possess under-utilised and under-recognised resources that can be helpful for young people.

**See Practice Guide 3:
Family and Community Inclusive Practice**

Culturally sensitive

Cultural systems can protect and nurture young people as they develop. Practitioners understand that cultural affiliation shapes how positive adaptation and development is understood and how resilience is recognised. We strive to ensure that the cultural identity/s and affiliations of all young people and families that we work with are understood, accepted and celebrated in an appropriate and respectful way.

We recognise that embedded within cultures are distinct knowledge systems that generate ways of knowing and seeing that are different than an otherwise dominant culture within Australia. Ways of knowing and seeing can exist side by side and those astute young people, families and practitioners who can understand and hold different perspectives contribute much to making YSAS practice more accessible, safe and effective.

We strive to be anti-oppressive in our practice. This involves identifying, understanding and challenging the mechanisms by which discrimination, control, oppression and exclusion are enacted and sustained by systems of power and privilege that are inequitable.

**See Practice Guide 4:
Intersectional practice**

**See Practice Guide 5: Culturally
inclusive practice**

Trauma responsive

Many young people's behaviours, regardless of how harmful the consequence, reflect their best efforts to manage the impacts of trauma in their life and the painful and difficult feelings and thoughts that result. Our practitioners connect with young people to understand the function and meaning of these behaviours and we avoid punitive responses.

Being 'trauma responsive' means actively supporting each young person to self-regulate by working with physical sensations and states so that they do not need to seek relief in substance use, self-injury or other behaviours that can be harmful and risky. If or when they do, young people are not judged or blamed. Our practitioners and programs offer restorative experiences that reduce the impact of trauma.

**See Practice Guide 6:
Trauma Responsive Care**

Strengths based

YSAS practitioners frame positive goals for their work with young people. This does not mean that risks, symptoms or difficulties are ignored but rather that assets and strengths are identified, cultivated and incorporated into our care planning. These are resources that are found within each young person and in their environment.

Being person centred, relationship based and holistic, creates the conditions in which young people and families (together with YSAS practitioners and other service providers) can uncover and recognise strengths and talents that can be hidden by deficit or problem-focused approaches.

Our practitioners collaborate with young people to identify capabilities that may have been utilised in activity that may have been antisocial and at times illegal, and to work through ways to apply these capabilities in pro-social pursuits, for personal growth and to benefit others.

**See Practice Guide 7:
Strengths-based practice focussed
on solutions**





Outcomes and impact

How do we know that we are effective?

We monitor the extent to which we are connecting with populations of young people and families who experience serious disadvantage.

The needs and characteristics of each young person and family that use YSAS services are identified and recorded confidentially by our practitioners in the YSAS 'Client Information System'. This information is aggregated and analysed to help us know if we are continuing to engage young people and families experiencing serious disadvantage and to understand more about their difficulties and strengths.

We also record and monitor the number of young people (and families) of identities and backgrounds that are often discriminated against and excluded from services.

Our target populations include young people and families who are:

- From Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- From culturally diverse communities, particularly those with refugee and asylum seeker experiences
- LGBTQIA+

Also included are young people who are:

- In the 'Out-of-Home Care' system
- Experiencing housing instability
- Young people with criminal justice system involvement
- Young people who are disconnected from education and work

YSAS services develop resilient young people and families who have the capacity to overcome problems and lead healthy and fulfilling lives.



We listen to what young people and families tell us about their experience of our services

We engage with the young people and families who use our services and seek to understand their experience of what has been delivered for them.

They provide us with an appraisal of whether:

- They were made to feel welcome in our services
- They felt safe in our services
- Their situation improved as a result of the support that they received
- They felt the program staff listened to them
- They were involved in decisions about their care
- Their cultural needs were understood and supported
- The service helped them achieve their goals
- They would recommend the service to a friend or family member

Through participation and partnership with young people, families and communities, there are many other ways we learn about our impact.

These include input from our:

- YSAS wide and program based 'Youth Advisory Committees'
- Annual 'Youth Partnership Month' and 'Ideas Month' activities capturing feedback and advice from young people
- Family and Community Reference Group
- Comprehensive YSAS feedback and complaints system

We monitor whether young people achieve their goals for involvement with YSAS

YSAS employs 'Goal Attainment Scaling' to measure the extent to which a service user's goals are achieved in the course of intervention and to evaluate program effectiveness.

We measure the capacity of each young person and family to meet their needs and be well.

Our programs and practitioners create the conditions for young people and families to achieve the following outcomes:

- Greater safety and protection from harm
- Increased stability and capacity to cope
- Greater social and economic participation
- Improved connection with family, culture and community
- Improved mental health and well being
- Reduced substance-use related harm
- Reduced involvement with the 'Criminal Justice System'

Each of these outcome areas has a corresponding set of measures that are captured in the YSAS 'Client Information System' and the subject of routine reporting and review.

**See Practice Guide 17:
Outcome measurement and reporting**

YSAS Practice Guides

The YSAS 'Resilience Based Practice Framework' overarches and supports a range of practice guides:

Practice Guide 1: Developmentally geared practice

Practice Guide 2: Relationship based practice

Practice Guide 3: Family and Community Inclusive Practice

Practice Guide 4: Intersectional practice

Practice Guide 5: Culturally inclusive practice

Practice Guide 6: Trauma Responsive Care

Practice Guide 7: Strengths-based practice focussed on solutions

Practice Guide 8: Setting limits to build resilience

Practice Guide 9: Relapse prevention

Practice Guide 10: Co-creating solutions and outcomes with young people and families

Practice Guide 11: Resilience based harm reduction

Practice Guide 12: Brief Intervention – Single session consultation

Practice Guide 13: Creating the conditions for positive change

Practice Guide 14: Resilience based care planning

Practice guide 15: Preventing and Responding to Family and Gender-based violence

Practice Guide 16: Youth AOD practice and Out-of-Home Care

Practice Guide 17: Outcome measurement and reporting

My inspiration for this piece was what I feel YSAS stands for. The eye is drawn to the centre as young people are drawn to a gathering place.

The currents lead to the meeting place in the middle which is YSAS. There young people can come together, find support, encouragement, friendship and ultimately themselves. The four ocean currents are filled with creatures representing different young people and families on their many journeys of life.

The turtles are parents and their child. The parents are guiding their child through obstacles. On each side are meeting places filled with family, friends and connections.

I chose bright colours because I feel that they represent radiance of youth and include all the diversity of youth who come to YSAS. We are all one when we come together at a meeting place.

In my experience with Bunjilwarra I have felt included, respected and supported and I wanted to convey this in my art. Bunjilwarra is a place of healing and recovery. It is here that I have found the time and mindfulness to rediscover my creativity as an Aboriginal woman. I will be forever grateful to Bunjilwarra as it has allowed me to find myself and change my life in a positive way.

I hope my art brings brightness to the viewer's day and leaves them with a sense of happiness.

Alisha, F

Acknowledgements

Author: Andrew Bruun

Editor: Pru Salter (Salter Hill Group)

Contributors:

- Andrea Fernandez
- Anyaak Abiel
- Daniel Robinson Croft
- David Jeffery
- Dom Ennis
- Elise Gogel
- Evie Isaac
- Geoff Bayldon
- Georgia Willmott
- Jacqui Sundbery
- Kellie Ferris
- Laura Gurrieri
- Melissa Lyon
- Mia McDonald
- Michelle Wills
- N'Gamoh Braima
- Richard Maneja
- Robyn Freestone
- Shane Weir

Contact information

YSAS Reception

Phone. 03 94158881

Email: reception@ysas.org.au

ysas.org.au

Graphics: Graeme Webb (gwdesign.com.au)

Suggested citation: Bruun, A. (2023). YSAS Resilience Based Practice.
YSAS Pty Ltd, Melbourne, Australia

Copyright 2023: YSAS Pty Ltd – All Rights Reserved