

Tool: Ways of Being Scenarios

Use this activity with a group of staff to start a conversation about the Ways of Being (WOB) model and youth. Each scenario describes the story of an individual youth (Wobbie) with discussion questions about best practices for working with that youth. This activity will strengthen staff understanding of the Ways of Being model and SEL skills. The Wobbies were created in partnership with a team of diverse young people as part of the Youth Voice Project on Youth Ways of Being (YWOB).

Why This Matters

- Thinking about how to support the SEL skills of youth allows staff to reflect on their past practices and plan for the future.
- A group discussion allows staff to exchange best practices and learn from each other.

Getting Started

- This activity is most effective after staff already have a shared understanding of the [Ways of Being Model](#). Try starting with the [Ways of Being Quick Guides](#) as a way to introduce the Ways of Being model.
- Time: Plan for at least 30 minutes for each scenario. Discuss all Wobbies in one activity or split up the discussions over several sessions.

How To Use It

- 1) Make copies of the individual scenarios or read aloud among a group of staff.
- 2) Use the discussion questions under each scenario to begin a conversation about the Wobbie.

Take It Further

- Have staff think about a particular youth that they are working with and discuss their areas of strength and growth in the Ways of Being model.
- After you have discussed each Wobbie, consider the following questions:
 - Is there a Ways of Being that you feel most comfortable supporting youth in?
 - Which Ways of Being are you strongest in? Which Ways of Being are you working to improve?
 - How do your own social and emotional skills affect how you work with youth?

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DREW

You work in an after-school program that offers digital media production tools and space for teens. Drew started coming to the program at the beginning of his freshman year in high school, and has become a daily visitor over the last two years. Drew is very focused on his music, and many other musicians in the space value his advice and his assistance with their projects. For a little while, Drew brought a couple of his friends with him to the program when he came every week. You encouraged his friends to try activities and hang out with other teens while they waited for Drew, but they never seemed to want to engage with anything in the space. During one of Drew's sessions in the studio, you saw Eddie passing joints to one of Drew's other friends. You asked Eddie to leave for the day, and he and Drew's other friends haven't returned since. You often see Eddie out on the street corner with a group of older teens. That particular street corner has become a target for law enforcement as they crack down on truancy and youth crime in the city. In the last few weeks, Drew has asked if you could hold the studio for him while he takes a break during his reserved time block. Because of the demand for studio time, the policy the teens in the program agreed on states that during your 2-hour time block you should only leave for short bathroom breaks or you'll forfeit the rest of your time.

Last week, you noticed that Drew was gone for 30 minutes. Today, when you check in with Drew, you remind him of the break policy. While you're talking to Drew, he gets a text. He reads the text and looks anxious, then hesitantly asks to take a break. When you ask him to affirm that he'll only be gone for a few minutes, he hesitates. He begins telling you about Eddie, whom he's known most of his life. Eddie always wants to hang out with him when he's at the teen center. Drew's parents have told him to stay away from Eddie and his friends because they think he's a bad influence. Drew knows that Eddie is mixed up in some bad stuff, but he's not really sure what to do. He's known Eddie for a long time, and being Eddie's friend confers some degree of protection. At the same time, Drew doesn't want to necessarily be identified as one of Eddie's crew. His dream is to become a professional musician, and he's worried that any trouble he might get into as a result of being associated with Eddie might prevent or delay his plans for his future.



Discussion Questions

- What Ways of Being skills is Drew using?
- What are the issues that Drew is grappling with right now? (identity, relationships, priorities, etc) What conflict is Drew experiencing?
- When have you been in Drew's position? What factors affected your decisions in this situation?
- In what ways can you support Drew's decision-making process? What questions could you ask Drew?

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NIKKI

You are the dance team coach at Green Valley High School. Every fall, a new group of excited freshmen joins the school's dance team, where they are welcomed with open arms by the upperclassmen. Friendships form quickly on the school's dance team, and there is a lot of camaraderie among the dancers as they support each other to improve their skills and work together as a team in competitions. Nikki joins this year's crop of freshman dancers. She quickly finds her place in the team and looks happy and engaged during practices, suggesting ideas and helping others when they struggle with routines. She is talented and is liked and respected by her teammates. In early October, Nikki uncharacteristically begins showing up late for practice a couple times a week. You pull her aside to ask her about it, and she apologizes but offers no explanation. As the school year goes on, you notice that she is becoming withdrawn during practices. You overhear some of the girls invite her to a team gathering at another team member's house, and when she declines, one of the dancers says "you never come to anything anymore. Is everything okay?" Nikki mumbles something and quickly leaves. In the next few weeks she misses two practices. If she misses another practice, she will not be allowed to participate in an upcoming competition.

One day after practice, while you're finishing paperwork in the office, you see Nikki go by with her head down. You call her into the office and ask her how things are going. She bursts into tears. After she calms down, she explains that everything is going wrong in her life. She's failing geometry, she missed deadlines for the literary magazine and now the other students no longer trust her with projects. Her parents are disappointed in how she's doing in school, and told her that she needs to raise her grades or else she'll need to drop the dance team. Nikki has always been "the smart one" in her group of friends, and while she's frustrated with how unsuccessful she feels, she's also embarrassed that others might find out how poorly she's doing. You can tell that she feels overwhelmed, and doesn't know where to start to begin addressing her situation. You know that the school has an after-school tutoring program—a couple girls on the dance team get help with their assignments there.



Discussion Questions

- What Ways of Being is Nikki demonstrating?
- What are some of the barriers to her success? Which ones are barriers she has made for herself?
- What are some concrete issues that you could help Nikki address?
- What are some questions you could ask Nikki?
- What strategies could you suggest to Nikki? What are some first steps she could take?
- What are some of the positive SEL skills that she could start developing?