

Becoming Happy and Healthy Young Adults

well-being, relationship, gender and sexuality retreat for young people and the people and organisations who support them

Young people are growing up under more pressure than ever before. Some of this pressure is personal in nature: stressful family lives, academic attainment, getting a job and an income, finding affordable housing, societal expectations and peer pressure (gender, sexuality, sex, social groups).

Some of the pressure is cultural: the overwhelming knowledge that we are facing severe, escalating environmental degradation, climate change or societal issues like the mass migration of Syrian refugees into Europe; or increased awareness of the acknowledged impact of cultural and institutional sexual, racial or economic stereotyping and divisions. The UK sadly ranks bottom of the UNICEF report card for children and young people's wellbeing among the richest countries of the world. (www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf)

In a system which focuses on educational and academic achievement and future economic success above and beyond wellbeing and happiness as a measure of success for children and young people, we are losing time and space for supporting young people to explore and speak about who they are, how they are and what they need to develop emotional intelligence and relational skills, and improve their relationships with themselves and each other.

This is not dissimilar from the challenges facing many organisations who are often equally under huge financial and human resource constraints where staff are unable to find the time to speak about the challenges and issues they are experiencing in a safe and non-judgemental space.

We are inviting organisations that work with young people to co-create healthy cultures and communities with us to ensure that young people, and those who work with them, create the time to listen to whatever is going on inside them, ask for help when it is needed and learn vital skills in relationship and communication.

Our programme "Becoming happy and healthy young adults" is designed to support young people between the ages of 15 and 21 years, and those that support them, to learn these essential skills. Spending five days away from their traditional learning and home context, young people will work alongside adult professionals from their environments, with the guidance of experienced facilitators to explore the issues and challenges they face in their lives.

The staff and young people will take away from this experience an array of personal tools and practices to help them in their day to day lives. Additionally, they will be equipped to set up and sustain regular group practises with familiar professionals upon their return.

Most importantly this programme will be a fun experience, connecting us deeply to ourselves, each other and our natural environment – both as individuals and as single gender and co-gender groups – so that we can work together on the interpersonal and societal issues that we face as growing male, female and transgender human beings.

How does it work?

Initially we will work with the adults who will be attending alongside the young people, to discuss how the programme will work, including group agreements, wellbeing and safety. As an evaluation

and impact measurement of the programme's success, we will profile the participants and their views on personal well-being prior to their attendance.

Following this will be a five-day residential programme with 24 young people (12 boys and 12 girls), and 6 adults staff (3 male, 3 female). The programme will be supported by 6 facilitators and up to 6 young support staff.

On completion of the programme, we will work in situ with the organisations that support the young people to create on-going facilitated group processes and activities for participants and other young people who access the services so that the benefits of the programme can be developed and sustained, and assisting staff and young people to embed the practices they have found most useful in their own contexts and environments.

Over the course of the following six months, we will offer coaching support and work with the organisations to monitor and review the journeys of the young people, recording the impact on their emotional wellbeing and ability to manage and express their feelings and emotions.

What is included in the residential programme?

A dynamic mix of indoor and outdoor activities will help attendees explore the story of who they are in the context of their lives so far, which will include the family and societal pressures which are part of that story.

Exercises and games on an individual and group basis will help participants explore the choices they make, increase their awareness of their own sense of agency in their lives, and how they could choose to make different choices in the future.

An array of tools and practices which participants will learn that can be integrated into the day to day lives supporting their wellbeing, building resilience, relationship and communication skills, self-authority and self-parenting skills.

Also included will be exercises that connect us to the natural environment, which will be setting specific, but will also be possible to replicate in locations where participants live.

What happens after the programme?

Following the residential programme we will work with the adult staff from the organisations, plus leaders within that organisation and any relevant staff (paid or volunteer), to co-create on-going facilitated group sessions. This on-going work can become part of how adults relate to young people in their normal settings and can inform future engagement with young people who have not attended the residential programme.

Time Commitments

For the adult staff there will be a time commitment of 3.5 hours orientation before the residential, 5 days attending the residential, 5 hours post-residential training and 4.5 hours skype coaching over a six month period. Adults staff may choose to implement learning into what they already programme

or programme some new activities based on what they have learnt. **Total expected staff time over six months is expected to be 7 days.**

For young people there will be a time commitment of 1-2 hours contact time pre-residential, 5 days attending the residential and then 2 hours post-residential research and reflection after 3 months and six months. **Total expected time with young people over six months is 5.5 days.**

This programme would also aim to work with a number of members of the leadership team and additional supporters (volunteers, key staff) as possible for 3.5 hours post-residential to introduce key approaches and practices which the organisation may choose to integrate into their toolkit.

Ongoing development for young people is available once they have completed the residential as they are then invited to be part of the young supporting team if they choose to. This offers them the opportunity to mentor other young people, deepen their learnings from their own participation in the programme, develop greater self-knowledge, communication and relationship skills and learn facilitation skills.

Programme Leaders

Kanada Elizabeth Gorla



Kanada has been working with young people throughout her career, from her previous work as the Head of Junior Drama at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, directing community theatre and opera projects, artist in residencies in schools and colleges, running student workshops in connection with plays she has directed and toured nationally and in Europe; to her current work which includes transformational work with young people through leadership and personal development programmes like the Catalyst course (www.embercombe.org/catalyst) which has empowered some 350 young people as they discover who they are and what they are capable of, and navigate the threshold into adulthood.

Kanada leads her own social business SHINE (www.shineinchangingtimes.co.uk) where her work focuses on mentoring and coaching individuals and teams for wellbeing and resilience, self-leadership, authentic leadership and change-making skills, and fostering cultures that are both high-performing and resilient. With Sharpham Trust (www.sharphamtrust.org) Kanada leads woodland mindfulness & nature connection retreats and has been commissioned to create a new retreat for activists in 2016 called “Sustaining Ourselves”. Kanada is a long-time Senior Associate with Embercombe, a leadership and sustainability centre in Devon (www.embercombe.org) where she is a lead facilitator on The Journey, Catalyst, On Purpose, Speaking Out, The Embrace and other core programmes.

Kanada’s draws upon a deep pool of skills and resources honed over her many years as an community arts animateur, theatre and opera director and people and organisation consultant. She is committed to doing what she can to assist in the co-creation of ‘communities worth coming home to’ (Martin Prechtel, A Tadpole’s Tail: on Initiation versus Tribalism).

Jamie Colston



Jamie has been working with young people supporting them to find their own sense of who they are and what their place in the world is for almost ten years. In the last few years this has been through co-designing and delivering environmental conferences with and for young people to explore the many issues we face in the world today. Jamie has trained adults and young people in facilitation skills, worked in and across schools supporting self-organising leadership and has coached and mentored young people. He is currently a facilitator at a new democratic school for 5-12 year olds in Bristol.

Jamie is trained in Art of Hosting and Systemic Constellations work and has a variety of other tools including Hand in Hand Parenting by Connection, Non Violent Communication and Embodied facilitation. He is passionate about creating a world where we are deeply connected to ourselves, each other, our natural environment and our planet so that all of our children can experience a peaceful, respectful and abundant life.

Contact Us

If you would like further information or are interested in being involved in this programme, please contact us directly on jamie@jamiecolston.com or 07909 442 006; kanada@shineinchangingtimes.co.uk or 01803 864 593.