

ELEVATING YOUTH VOICES WORKGROUP

~FROM A WISH TO A PLAN~

***Brought to you by, Youth MOVE Suncoast and
participating youth and organizations***

Contact Jordan Stonecypher at
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Work/School-Life Balance

Team members:

- Leader: Jordan
- Supports: Sydney, Vanessa, Mia, Izzy

Wish: Engage and promote work/school-life balance

- Normalizing when people want to slow down and rest.
- Reduce pressure to do as much as you can in preparation for college, jobs or to make yourself stand out
- To be able to rest according to their unique needs
- Have young people lead a new work culture where work-life balance

Why: Burnout is real! How are we supposed to sustain a meaningful and impactful work life, or enjoy our free time that helps to build a true foundation of who we are as people if we are over dedicating ourselves to productivity. We know from countless stories of people on their deathbed that it is not about how productive you are in life but the meaning and the relationships you experience throughout life. Therefore, it is time for our work culture, a place we spend 40+ a week engaging in, to have a paradigm shift from productively being the focus, to meaning making and the relationships building we gain in the work we do.

Currently reality

- **Observation 1:** Fast pace culture fueling the need to rush through the experience of work. Slowing down or doing things at your own pace equates to being lazy and inconvenient.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?** Capitalism creates the need to beat everyone in the race to the 'next big thing'. Some needs are dire so we need to 'rush' to create something that gets needs met.
- **Observation 2:** Workers don't have as many rights as they should.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?** Many workers fear retaliation for standing up for themselves through individual or group advocacy (think: unions). Employers have the right to terminate you at will and are not required to pay liveable wages. This can create fear around fighting for worker's rights to make work more accessible, less discriminatory, fairly compensated, given breaks, etc.
- **Observation 3:** Teens and young adults need to feel comfortable and informed about accessing spaces that support their mental health.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?** Teens/ YA may not be informed, have access to transportation, and experience social anxiety which may prevent them from even pursuing attending these events.

Vision: A work/school culture that prioritizes basic needs, meaning making, and relationships at a pace that is natural to the human brain/life.

How do we get there?

Objective 1: Lead trainings (from a youth and young adult perspective) at organizations/business/schools on the importance of a work-life balance/relational-focused work/school culture is to us (future employees) and how we can all together create that

- Steps involved
 - Gather info- Obtain data/information on the supports/barriers to accessing a slow work culture
 - Make training(s)- Use this data/information to inform the creation of a training that focuses on a youth and young adult perspective and make sure it is goal oriented and practical
 - Pilot training- test training out on a few 'safe' places
 - Launch- schedule trainings for public
- Success measurements
 - organizations/business/schools report an understanding of what youth and young adults want in a work/school culture
 - organizations/business/schools report practical action steps on how to create what youth and young adults want in a work/school culture

Objective 2: Host work/school-life balance culture events that youth/young adults and organizations/business/schools can engage in

- Steps involved
 - Gather info- Obtain data/information on the supports/barriers to accessing a slow work culture
 - Create event ideas- Use this data/information to inform the creation of events for youth/young adult and organizations/business/schools that help create the experience and idea building of how to engage in slow work culture for themselves and their environments
 - Plan events- plan specific events with youth/young adult and organizations/business/schools
- Success measurements
 - Host 3 events throughout the Y/YA term
 - Increases in participation at events
 - Participants express gaining an understanding of how to create work/school-life balance for themselves and their organizations/business/schools

Objective 3: Work-life balance group support for youth and young adults

- Steps involved
 - Create groups structure and schedule
 - Find facilitators and train them
 - Host groups
- Success measurements

- Participants receive support to express their work/school stress
- Participant gain ideas on how to balance their work/school-life

What are the obstacles might we come across when trying to bring the wish to life? And how can we overcome these obstacles?

- Organizations/business/schools won't buy in to the importance
 - Show them the data about how burnout is affecting youth/young adults and why this is happening
- Youth/young adults will be scared this won't help them have the 'competitive' edge into colleges/jobs
 - Identify values and help them understand if they really want to work with or go to school at a place that does not agree with their values of work-life balance

What else do we need to consider in order to make this wish come true?

- Connections
- Data/research
- Computers
- Accessible locations
- Stipends for trainings, events, groups facilitation
- Event supplies

Mental Health

Team members:

- Leader: Mia
- Supports: Vanessa, Sydney, Izzy

Wish: Understand and engage in mental health education, needs, and resources

- Engage in exercise and the outdoors as a source of mental health support
- understand and research mental health illnesses and try to find the root causes of them to stay educated and educate others.
- At school, instead of watching long mental health lectures be replaced with something that engages youth in learning about mental health, like youth speaking about their mental health, case studies related to mental health, etc
- Having a mental health education and know the support for youth who might be struggling with their mental health

Why:

- Mental health issues are rising, especially among teens
- Some may know they need help but don't have the resources near them/know of them
- As advocates, we may want to provide help, but may be providing/encouraging help in the wrong way

Current reality

- **Observation 1:** Some individuals may be busy and find engaging in mental health education uninteresting and unimportant or may not know where to start with engagement.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?**
 - The stigma behind mental health is very real, and people do not want to engage in a “sensitive” topic if they don’t have to. Nowadays, teens tend to gravitate towards superficial topics of conversation and avoid deep conversations because it is an easier way to navigate communication.
- **Observation 2:** Because the conversation of mental health is newer among older generations, people tend to pay so much attention to raising awareness but care less about doing anything about it. However, it should not stop at creating awareness; plans and steps need to be taken to involve others in stopping the stigma.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?**
 - Not many people want to engage or talk about it because they are afraid to share with others in the professional realm out of fear of being judged or losing an opportunity, like a job. Since the topic is so sensitive, one comment or conversation about a struggle with mental health can look like an alarm going off and conclusions can be jumped to very quickly based on the existing stigma. If you or a loved one are struggling with

mental health, it's common to feel different than other people or to feel like no one else understands, which is another reason why action doesn't get taken. If no one understands, what's the point of trying to get them to understand? Some people feel that others only understand the struggle with mental illness if they have had lived experience themselves with it.

- **Observation 3:** School systems and organizations will generally see mental health as something you do, not something to be. Mental health has become a check list item instead of a consistent state of being in what we need within ourselves and each other. Because of this, superficial video, talks, and more are proposed as the solution to helping people's mental health, when in reality, we need more long-term engagement and resources to help truly change our mental health for the better.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?**
 - Fast paced culture sees mental health struggles as something to put a 'coping skill' bandaid on instead of taking the time to look in the mirror to challenge and change itself for the better so those in the community to truly get what they need

Vision: Young folks and community stakeholder in the community take the time to educate, engage with and apply their mental health knowledge for themselves and others to create long term health

How do we get there?

Objective 1: Develop mental health education that is more engaging to youth so they have a better understanding of mental health

- Steps involved
 - Brainstorm mental health education ideas that youth would find engaging (hearing personal experiences from other youth, case studies, maybe something related to social media like a mental health instagram)
 - Reach out to schools or other places where youth are usually at to coordinate with them on how to implement these education ideas
- Success measurements
 - Feedback from youth on if they feel they can engage with the material

Objective 2: Encourage young folks and community stakeholders to not just become engaged in mental health conversation, but take steps to actively participate in supporting mental health that is engaging and impactful

- Steps involved
 - Once they are engaged in mental health conversations/education, help them brainstorm ideas they can make mental health a more continuously engaging avenue that works with who they are and their populations
 - Help them implement these ideas through coaching, support, coordination and advocacy

- Continuously reassess mental health needs and disparities that we can bridge the gap between
- Success measurements
 - Work with at least three organization/places that want to improve their cultures/peoples mental health
 - Have these people/population report mental health improvement that they experiences is long term change

What are the obstacles might we come across when trying to bring the wish to life? And how can we overcome these obstacles?

- Buy in from those that needs to change
 - Create a personal connection with them and their tie to mental health
- Their capacity to make this happen
 - Have YMS and other organizations to help carry them through this in a way that still create them to sustain it long term

What else do we need to consider in order to make this wish come true?

- Getting more organization on board to help implement this
- Building strong trusting relationship with those who need to make the change

Engagement

Team members:

- Leader: Xinyi
- Supports: Sydney, Vanessa, Mia, Izzy, Jordan

Wish: Increase youth and young adult engagement in...

- Activities that are good for their mental health
- Community service and organizations that promote their interest
- Community opportunities, resources and people
- Cultural and language inclusivity

Why: Youth engagement has been dropping, especially after covid. Youth and young adults are afraid of trying new things or meeting new people in their community, and they avoid making meaningful social connections and taking up opportunities they are interested in. Some may know that there are fun activities or opportunities in their community, but since they don't know how these activities or events would look like, they hesitate when it comes to actually joining these events.

Currently reality

- **Observation 1:** Youth and young adults are scared of trying new things, either because they fear judgment or because they fear they won't fit into the group or activity that they are joining.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?** Trying new things is hard, and it takes courage. Especially for youth and young adults, it's hard for them to step out of their comfort zone (whatever that would look like, from only staying in their rooms to only talking to their friends). This is partly due to the lasting effects of covid, where everyone was so used to staying at home doing routine tasks. This is also due to the current social standards, and what is considered "normal" by teens and young adults. One might be scared of judgment by peers if, instead of going to a party, they go to a youth move cosmetics event. There are so many activities that can be taken up in the community that teens will find enjoyable, and all it takes is for the youth to give these activities a chance.
- **Observation 2:** Young folk are only engaging to 'put something on their resume' and not because they care and are passionate
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?** When young folk are raised in a competitive culture, it creates a 'fend for yourself' and 'am I good enough' mentality. Because of this, we have created a culture of young people who are either there to engage because they want to add something to their resume, or don't believe they are good enough to engage. Young folks have lost the foundation of community and connection where people are engaged because they care and feel cared for.
 - Overextending yourself with passion

- **Observation 3:** Youth are unmotivated to try new things or activities that stray from the norm, because it is either stigmatized or viewed with a negative perspective.
 - **Why is this part of the current reality?** Youth don't realize that it takes more effort to do things that are different and to engage in multiple activities because it is normalized to partake in easy access platforms and resources. A few to name are chatgpt, tiktok, mathway, google translate, and other social media and answer key platforms. This makes getting an answer or entertainment that much more convenient and mindless, which creates an unconscious comparison to the effort required to engage in meaningful activities. In comparison to the easy access platforms, engaging in a big project or sending an email to an organization gets put off by youth because it seems that much harder in comparison.

Vision: Young folks become engaged in a confident and committed way because they are interested, invested and connected to the vision and mission.

How do we get there?

Objective 1: Create opportunity for 'intro/beginners' engagement opportunities via events, volunteer opportunities, etc

- Steps involved
 - Brainstorm and create 'intro' opportunities/events
 - Collaborate with local organization/youth/young adults we are connected to on these opportunities/events
 - Incentive them to 'bring a friend' via prizes/stipends
 - Advertise them as 'into' opportunities to their youth/young adults/friends
- Success measurements (qualitative and quantitative outcomes)
 - Increase youth/young adult new engagement by 20%
 - Hold 'intro' opportunities/events once a quarter
 - Youth and young adults report lower anxiety/fear about engagement

Objective 2: Create accessible community service opportunities with organizations that promote youth's interests

- Get buy-in from a diverse group of local youth
- Create convenient ways for them to provide feedback. For instance, for surveys, make them quick, 1 click away, and use plain language.
- Ask them (or task them) to help create these community serviced opportunities with their wishes in mind. What does a youth friendly space look and feel like to them?
- Success measurements (qualitative and quantitative outcomes)
 - Surveys/feedback. Ask youth who attend groups if they feel that this group was made with them in mind.

- Count numbers and see how much of an increase we have in youth engagement prior to versus after implementing changes based on their feedback.

Objective 3: Create diverse spaces for youth, such as through a support group.

- Steps involved
 - Create groups structure and schedule
 - Find facilitators and train them
 - Host groups
- Success measurements (qualitative and quantitative outcomes)
 - a. Participants receive support that they might not otherwise have access to

What are the obstacles might we come across when trying to bring the wish to life? And how can we overcome these obstacles?

- It might be difficult to give introductions about a certain organization's volunteer opportunities to a group of youth or young adults that's part of another organization. We can get around this by creating volunteer opportunities that joins multiple organizations together and that aligns with the goals and interests of multiple organizations in the community. This way, youth will have access to a more diverse range of opportunities, while getting to know peers from different organizations and learning about the initiatives different organizations have in the community