



Youth Thrive Theory of Change

Youth Thrive is a research informed Framework and an initiative that works with young leaders and youth-serving agencies and organizations. Our goal is to improve programs, policies, and practices using what we know about adolescent development, valuing youth's own experiences and perspectives, and giving young people opportunities to succeed.

We use a garden analogy to explain Youth Thrive's Theory of Change. The gardener, pouring seeds into the ground, represents staff and other caring people who work directly with young people. The seeds represent young people themselves, ready to grow, change, and thrive. When we plant seeds, they need strong soil to take root and grow.



The ground represents our Key Values because they are the foundation that our Protective and Promotive Factors are built on and they guide all of our work.

For plants to grow they need sunlight. That light represents the Protective and Promotive Factors that promote healthy growth and well-being of all young people.

The five Factors are:

1. Youth Resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of Adolescent Development
4. Concrete Support in Times of Need
5. Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence



Risk Factors are represented by the storm and are conditions that increase the likelihood of poor outcomes. Specific risk factors are:

1. Psychological stressors
2. Lack of Supportive relationships with family, peers, and adults
3. Lack of opportunities for positive growth and development
4. Unsafe, unstable, inequitable (i.e., racist or discriminatory) environments



Plants need water to grow but too much water can drown them out. The greenhouse shelter doesn't take all the risk factors away, but it provides protection and reduces the impact of torrential rain or damaging wind, those highly stressful conditions and events.

When we increase protective and promotive factors and reduce risk factors, we are able to achieve dynamic outcomes for youth who are:

1. Physically and emotionally healthy
2. Hopeful, optimistic, compassionate, and curious
3. Able to form and sustain caring committed relationships
4. Successful in school, at work, and able to serve their community and society.

Seeds grow into beautiful flowers. Young people are able to grow into who they want to be.

