Factors that Might Influence Your Approach to Youth Work

When exploring the various models of intervention, it is important that you think about the different skills and styles of working that you may be required to bring to the workplace.

As you have probably come to understand, many models are works in progress and there are crossovers in ideology and values.

Whatever strategies are used they will be influenced by the funding requirements of your position and also the direct needs of the young person. When looking at models of youth work intervention to use in your work, it is important to be aware of a variety of additional factors, such as:

- the immediate needs for the young person’s health
- the requirements of the funding body and the organisation
- the expectations of other parties involved (e.g., families, peers)
- statutory issues
- accommodation
- the expectations of a philosophical framework
- whether you are working in isolation or within a group setting
- whether you are working in a rural setting
- specific issues relating to culture, class, gender, sexuality, disability, language
- the environment of work practice.
- duty of care for the immediate well-being of the young person (e.g., sexual abuse)
- purpose of the intervention.

These issues may have a significant impact on the type of intervention you use in working with young people. Timelines and funding are also important factors that influence how you might work with an individual young person or your whole client group.

Working with ‘high needs’ young people may be involved and lengthy due to a lack of support structures or the complexity of the issues that the young people may have. This can be in direct contrast to working with young people in a recreational program where there may be different goals and less complex needs. In both of these areas, youth workers may undertake different working practices to provide the young person with relevant supports or access to resources.

While you will find that there is no ‘concrete’ model of youth work and its systematic practice, it is fair to say that youth workers must be flexible, responsive and creative with their approach when working with youth.
Due to the diversity of practices, values and methods in the field, it is difficult to prescribe one model as a rule of service delivery. Youth workers need to be innovative and versatile in their approach and communications in order to assist in developing positive outcomes for all young people.

In discussing youth work, with the young person as the primary focus of service, it is necessary to be aware of why they have accessed the assistance of the worker. The youth may have walked in off the street to join the recreational activities provided by local council or may be involved with a service through a correctional order.

It is therefore important to recognise that there can be different expectations as to the outcome of any intervention you undertake with a young person, either by the individual themselves, their family, the workplace, other workers or the funding body.