



SELF AWARENESS

As a youth worker, what are you bringing into the youth setting?

When entering any situation we bring with us our own realities and these can have a direct impact on the way we react, tackle or interact with that situation. This self-awareness tool will give you a sense of what we mean by engaging in a self-reflective practice. It can support us in identifying what we carry that impacts consciously or unconsciously on how we engage with our young people, our colleagues and the community.

The following are some indicators that if checked regularly will significantly impact how we manage ourselves and the spaces we facilitate:



Perception: this is how we see, understand, or interpret something.

A useful question to ask is “How do things look?” (Instead of how things look to me? i.e. know that things could look different to everyone in the room.)



Beliefs: are the opinions and views that we hold strongly, and we accept them as true and real. When we react in a personal way to a situation it can be a sign that a core belief in us has been challenged.

A useful question to ask is “Do I know this to be true for others than me?”



Assumptions: are when we assume to fill gaps of uncertainty. It is when we accept a thing as true or certain even if we have no proof

A useful question to ask is “Do I know for certain that is it the case?”



Expectations: are what we think can, will or should happen. What we expect is often connected to our fears or hopes.

A useful question to ask is “Can I predict for certain what is going to happen?”



Feelings/Emotions: are the indicators of how we are at any given time and what may be happening for us

A useful question to ask is “Am I feeling anything right now? Can I recognise that feeling? Where can I feel it in my body?”

Check-in tool in practice

Routinely doing the check-in exercise above will help you to identify what is going on for you and will support your practice and the impact you have in any given situation. The more you practice the more it becomes something you do automatically.

The following scenario is how the check-in tool can work in practice.

During a youth group a young person has spoken while another was already speaking, this has now happened twice.



Maybe what it looks like to me (i.e. how I **perceive** it) is that the young person is speaking over the other and is doing it on purpose (which can result in me being irritated with this young person).



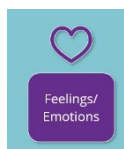
I **believe** that everybody has the right to participate equally and speaking over people is rude and this behaviour is challenging my belief (which can result in me feeling angry at this young person).



I may **assume** that the young person being “talked over” thinks I let them down and didn’t provide a safe space for them to participate (which can result in taking their side, or being in self-doubt regarding my ability to facilitate that space).



I may **expect** that the young person being “talked over” is not going to come back to my group because of this (which can result in my annoyance growing into anger and anxiety about my youth space).



When checking in with my **feelings** I may realise that what started as annoyance now is growing into anger and frustration (which can result in me asking the young person to leave the group, or create more anxiety at the thought of confronting this young person).

So by checking in with yourself you increase the chances of:

- Not being on the defensive.
- Responding in a non-judgmental way.
- Staying calm, and
- Demonstrating a compassionate attitude to the situation.