

# Inventory of Adult Attitudes and Behavior\*



**YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**  
© 2005 • www.yli.org • (415) 8 36-9160

This inventory was designed to give adults who interact with young people an opportunity to consider their beliefs, approaches and the framework from which they work with young people. It works from the assumption that attitudes are closely related to behavior and that by examining our attitudes it is possible to make sound decisions about how we can best influence an organization's approach to working with young people.

The statements below explore various aspects of the processes of planning; operating and evaluating the work of youth focused organizations. To what extent are young people involved in these processes, and how do the attitudes and behavior of adults within the organization affect the relationships of young people to the organization as regards these processes? Young people can participate in using the Inventory by indicating how well the statements describe the approach they see adults in the organization or system taking. This perspective is tremendously valuable. Let's face it; we don't always have the most accurate self-perception.

The Inventory includes 24 statements. Each person selects a number from the opinion scale and place it in the space provided to the left of the statement. The use of numbers from the lower end of the scale indicates that the statement is unlike the way the respondent approaches things. The use of numbers from the upper end of the scale indicates the person uses an approach similar to the statement.

## OPINION SCALE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Never my approach</b>		<b>Seldom my approach</b>		<b>Sometimes my approach</b>		<b>Often my approach</b>		<b>Always my approach</b>

## STATEMENTS

- \_\_\_ 1. As an adult leader, I engage young people in program decisions when I think this engagement will be a growth experience for them.
- \_\_\_ 2. It is most appropriate that adults determine what the programs for young people will be.
- \_\_\_ 3. Young people have a vantage point that is valuable for evaluating the successes and failures of specific programs.
- \_\_\_ 4. Training programs designed to improve organizational effectiveness should teach adults how to encourage young people to accept the organization's expectations, processes and programs as adults have designed them.

*continued*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Never my approach</b>		<b>Seldom my approach</b>		<b>Sometimes my approach</b>		<b>Often my approach</b>		<b>Always my approach</b>
___ 5.								
___ 6.								
___ 7.								
___ 8.								
___ 9.								
___ 10.								
___ 11.								
___ 12.								
___ 13.								
___ 14.								
___ 15.								
___ 16.								
___ 17.								
___ 18.								

*continued*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never my approach		Seldom my approach		Sometimes my approach		Often my approach		Always my approach

- \_\_\_ 19. Asking the opinions of young people as part of program evaluation will help them sharpen their thinking and observational skills.
- \_\_\_ 20. Training programs designed to improve organizational effectiveness should teach adults how to foster young people's participation in decision processes to bring the perspective of young people to bear on improving the organization.
- \_\_\_ 21. Management roles within our organization, by their very nature, are adult roles.
- \_\_\_ 22. Allowing young people to assume some leadership roles can help them develop skills for the future.
- \_\_\_ 23. In our organizational decision - making, adults and young people together should make the decisions.
- \_\_\_ 24. I believe that allowing young people to participate in organizational decision making would mislead them into thinking they can influence matters beyond their control.

**Now that you have completed the Inventory, the results can be tabulated by using the form on the next page.**



## Inventory Scoring

Now that you have completed the Inventory, transfer the numbers given from the statements to the appropriate box below. Total numbers at the bottom in each column to determine your adult attitude and behavior style towards youth.

Statements	Style #1	Style #2	Style #3
1. ....		<input type="text"/>	
2. ....	<input type="text"/>		
3. ....			<input type="text"/>
4. ....	<input type="text"/>		
5. ....		<input type="text"/>	
6. ....			<input type="text"/>
7. ....	<input type="text"/>		
8. ....		<input type="text"/>	
9. ....			<input type="text"/>
10. ....		<input type="text"/>	
11. ....	<input type="text"/>		
12. ....		<input type="text"/>	
13. ....			<input type="text"/>
14. ....	<input type="text"/>		
15. ....		<input type="text"/>	
16. ....			<input type="text"/>
17. ....	<input type="text"/>		
18. ....			<input type="text"/>
19. ....		<input type="text"/>	
20. ....			<input type="text"/>
21. ....	<input type="text"/>		
22. ....		<input type="text"/>	
23. ....			<input type="text"/>
24. ....		<input type="text"/>	
<b>Total Points</b>	_____	_____	_____
<b>Rank</b>	_____	_____	_____

**Results of Inventory of Adult Attitudes and Behavior** - The Inventory which you just completed, identifies three styles or approaches to working with young people. These styles are described below as a Spectrum of Adult Attitudes Toward Young People.

**Spectrum of Adult Attitudes Toward Young People** - These three styles can be related to any relationship between or among two or more people. Our concern, however, is with relationships between adults and young people within the context of planning, operating and evaluating organizations whose missions are to promote the well being of young people. You can relate your scores on the Inventory to the three parts of the Spectrum.

**STYLE #1: Young people viewed as objects** - Within this part of the attitudinal spectrum there are several postures. One of these, most definitely an extreme, sees young people as the “property” of the adult and serves as a justification for abusive treatment of various kinds. The adult sees little value in the young person except as the young person serves the desires of the adult. As a result, the adult controls the young person to serve whatever interests the adult may have. This may include such behavior as child abuse and the use of young people for pornographic purposes, both of which are criminal behavior.

Less extreme, but within this same part of the of the spectrum, is this attitude that adults know what is best for young people and see young people as the objects of the good intentions. This is not an uncommon parental attitude, and it also is often seen in adults who work professionally and as volunteers with young people. Within this attitude there is little room for a consideration of what young people think about the design of the program or opportunity. As the adult sees it, the responsibility of the young person is to take advantage of the program or opportunity designed by the adult.

**STYLE #2: Young people viewed as recipients** - The emphasis within this part of the spectrum is on young people as the recipients of the benefits of the program or opportunity. This may include youth participation in the design of the opportunity, but the primary emphasis of this attitude of the controlling adult(s) is on how the young person will benefit from participation and not on what the young person has to offer to the design process. The adult is still well in control of the conditions under which the young person participates, but allows youth participation because of the value of the experience to the young person. This attitude is also based upon the notion that adults know what is best for young people and may lead one cautiously to begin to open the door to youth participation on the adult’s terms. This relationship cannot reasonably be described as an adult/youth partnership, though there is some opportunity for the building of a sense of youth ownership in the outcome of the decisions made. This attitude demonstrates a concern for preparing young people for the future as responsible decision makers.

**STYLE #3: Young people viewed as resources** - This attitude is based upon respect for the contribution young people can make to the planning, operation and evaluation of a youth-focused organization (or family or community) in the present. It acknowledges that any leadership and decision-making roles involved can be shared by adults and young people. This may mean that both young people and adults need to learn the skills and attitudes necessary for shared decision making, and it may require some change in policy and administrative practice within the organization, or perhaps a reformulation of the organization’s mission, if there is to be a shift toward this attitude from one of those described above.

*continued*

<b>The Spectrum of Adult Attitudes Toward Young People</b>		
<b>Young People Viewed as Objects</b>	<b>Young People Viewed as Recipients</b>	<b>Young People Viewed as Resources</b>
<p><b>Style #1</b></p> <p>The adult is in control with no intention of youth involvement.</p> <p><b>The objective:</b> Personal growth of young people</p> <p><b>The byproduct:</b> Conformity of young people and acceptance of the program as it is.</p>	<p><b>Style #2</b></p> <p>The adult is in control and allows youth involvement.</p> <p><b>The objective:</b> Personal growth of young people</p> <p><b>The byproduct:</b> Increased organizational effectiveness.</p>	<p><b>Style #3</b></p> <p>There is a Youth/Adult Partnership (Shared Control).</p> <p><b>The objective:</b> Increased organizational effectiveness.</p> <p><b>The byproduct:</b> Personal growth of young people and adults.</p>

William Loftquist, the developer of this Inventory notes, “This exploration of the Spectrum of Attitudes and examination of the three styles related to it are intended to help identify and clarify these important matters. In the world of reality, however, things are never this clear and distinct. A blurred mixture is probably closer to what happens. For this reason it is useful to have a way to view the complex dynamics of the manner in which organizations operate and people relate to one another. Using the spectrum for planning the future of your organization and analyzing the ways adults and young people work together within the organization can assist you in becoming more focused and purposeful. For example, some people may be operating from a position of one style while others are working from another. Clarifying this can be useful in a staff development sense. Or the organization may have practices based upon different styles, creating inconsistencies that cause confusion. Shaping an agreed upon organizational culture around these issues can strengthen the organization.”

Loftquist adds, “We would challenge those involved in youth work to examine the ways you and your organization relate to young people, and to take specific steps toward respecting young people as resources. As this view of young people becomes the driving force behind policy, management and practice, we believe youth focused organizations will become more effective.” (Loftquist, 1989).

Loftquist, W. (1989). *The technology of prevention workbook: A leadership development program*. Tucson, AZ: Associates for Youth Development Publications. Property of Youth Leadership Institute (2005), <http://www.yli.org/>



**YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**  
© 2005 • [www.yli.org](http://www.yli.org) • (415) 8 36-9160

\*YLI adapted this inventory with permission from Technology of Prevention and has provided permission for use in this workbook only.