

Reframing *Youth Issues*

Mini-Toolkit Developed for the
Queensland Framing Champions Group



**Queensland Kids
Partnership**
every child thriving

About this toolkit

- Designed during a June 2024 *Framelab* held for Framing Champions as part of the Queensland Kids Partnership. Updated resources added in 2026.
- Supports use of 6 framing strategies to drive effective communication about youth.
- Sharing and using strategies across organisations can create a narrative that helps people see why supporting young people is so important and builds support for actions and reforms.

Framing & Mindsets

Recap

Framing =

Choices in how we present ideas



How people think/feel/act

Using the right frames can unlock new ways of thinking that increase support for change.

Using the wrong frames risks messages being ignored or even backfiring.

Choices in how we present ideas



Cultural Mindsets

How people think/feel/act

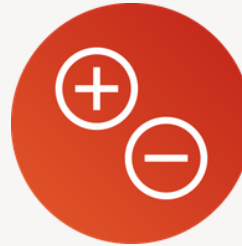
Cultural Mindsets



Implicit understandings, assumptions, and patterns of reasoning that shape thinking **below** the conscious level



Shape how we see the world and act in it



Multiple mindsets - even on the same issue; some open conversations and lead in productive directions; others close it down and are unproductive



Choices we make in HOW we say what we have to say determine which of the multiple mindsets become active and shape how people see the world

Three mindsets that stand in the way of change



Individualism



Fatalism



Other-ism

Three counterbalancing mindsets

Individualism



Contextualism

Fatalism



Pragmatism &
Progress

Other-ism



Collectivism

Challenges & Framing Strategies: **Young People/Adolescent Development**

Challenges

Dangerous Times HIGHLY unproductive: *if* environments = negative + young people easily influenced/can't make decisions *then* protection (of and from) only viable solution

Every time we: roll our eyes, include stats only about danger/risk, talk about communities only as sources of danger/threat

Adolescents as THEM: people “other” young people, which limits support for use of public resources to support positive outcomes

Every time we: talk about young people without giving them agency, use “they, them”, use “vulnerability” framing, use saviour/saved positioning

Limited understanding of how development happens: people don't see why changes happen and thus struggle to support solutions (cause >> solution)

Every time we: leave out the *how* of development...

Inequality not on radar: no thinking about connection of adolescence and inequality

Every time we: declare but don't connect/explain

Fatalism: don't see how we would improve outcomes or support positive development (just a really bad situation...unavoidably so)

Every time we: are all problem and no solution

6 strategies to navigate these challenges

#1 Rebalance the discussion with opportunity, learning & potential ... and repeat ... and repeat

#2 *Explain* structural factors that lead to disparities & frame systems as designed/redesigned by people

#3 Start with identity formation, social, emotional development ... rather than leading with adolescent brain development

#4 Use *Community Connections* frame to widen the lens: community -> young people & young people -> community (acknowledging limitations)

#5 Counter otherism with pronouns (avoid they/them/those, advance we/our), word choice (avoid vulnerable), use of common identities, goals, experiences

#6 Go for urgency/sense of the problem *with* efficacy/concrete solutions

#1 Rebalance the discussion to opportunity, learning & potential ... and repeat ... and repeat ...

Before

Young people are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure. They don't yet have the skills to make their own decisions or develop resilience.



What this cues

- Dangerous times
- Fatalism

#1 Rebalance the discussion to opportunity, learning & potential ... and repeat ... and repeat ...

Before

Young people are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure. They don't yet have the skills to make their own decisions or develop resilience.



After

In early adolescence, we develop skills to make our own decisions and become more resilient. There needs to be space for positive engagement with friends and supportive adults if we want everyone to have the opportunity to develop these skills.

*Tips: Emphasise opportunity
Use "we" and "us" when you can*

#2 Explain structural factors that lead to disparities & frame systems as designed/redesigned by people

Before

Adolescents from **under-resourced communities** often **have lower high school graduation rates** than other young people.



What this does

Leaves room for stereotypes and individualism

#2 Explain structural factors that lead to disparities & frame systems as designed/redesigned by people

Before

Adolescents from **under-resourced communities** often **have lower high school graduation rates** than other young people.



After

One impact of the history of **under-investing in some communities** is that schools that serve minority communities tend to have less funding and fewer resources. **This is one reason why** adolescents from under-served groups have lower high school graduation rates than their peers.

Tip: Always draw clear link between cause and effect

#3 Start with identity formation, social, emotional development ... not the brain

Before

Science tells us that the adolescent brain changes significantly between puberty and the mid-20s. These neurobiological changes are what drive a young person's cognitive and socio-emotional development.



What this cues

- Black box
- Unproductive models of science
- Biological takeover

#3 Start with identity formation, social, emotional development ... not the brain

Before

Science tells us that the adolescent brain changes significantly between puberty and the mid-20s. These neurobiological changes are what drive a young person's cognitive and socio- emotional development.



After

The changes occurring between puberty and the mid-20s create a period of intense learning about who we are and who we want to be. These changes are related to particular ways that the brain is developing during this time.

Tip: It's about ordering, not avoiding

#4 Use *Community Connections* frame to widen the lens:

community >> young people & young people >> community (acknowledging limitations)

Before

Supporting adolescents improves not only their **personal wellbeing**, but their **academic success**.



What this cues

- Individualism

#4 Use *Community Connections* frame to widen the lens:

community >> young people & young people >> community (acknowledging limitations)

Before

Supporting adolescents improves not only their **personal wellbeing**, but their **academic success**.



After

Supporting adolescents to engage with the world around them leads to **healthier and more vibrant communities for all of us - now and in the future**.

Tips: Stretch to connect with collective and future

Use examples that illustrate what connections to community look like - make it concrete

#5 Counter otherism with pronouns (avoid they/them/those, advance we/our), word choice (avoid vulnerable), use of common identities, goals, experiences

Before

Children and young people involved in youth justice most often come from communities experiencing entrenched inter-generational disadvantage. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and other children and young people of colour, and children with experience of the child protection system are significantly over-represented.



What this cues

- Otherism
- Fatalism

#5 Counter otherism with pronouns (avoid they/them/those, advance we/our), word choice (avoid vulnerable), use of common identities, goals, experiences

Before

Children and young people involved in youth justice most often come from communities experiencing entrenched inter-generational disadvantage. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and other children and young people of colour and children with experience of the child protection system are significantly over-represented.



After

An impact of under-investing in communities is that the quality and availability of critical supports for our young people - like schools, health services and jobs - decline. When communities don't offer a quality education or pathway to employment, one risk is that youth disengage and become involved in youth justice.

We can address the fact that these services exist in some places but not others by supporting quality schools and job programs in all communities, so that we can all learn and contribute through our adolescent years and beyond.

#6 Go for urgency/sense of the problem *with* efficacy/concrete solutions

Before

Young people are being criminalised. In 2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were over 21.4 times more likely to be in youth detention than non-Indigenous children and young people.



What this cues

- Fatalism ++
- Otherism

#6 Go for urgency/sense of the problem *with efficacy/concrete solutions*

Before

Young people are being criminalised. In 2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were over 21.4 times more likely to be in youth detention than non-Indigenous children and young people.



After

The strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People is evident in sustaining the world's oldest living cultures. But right now, we must address the unevenness of supports - part of the colonial legacy - through investments in proven initiatives that keep young people engaged and contributing to community life and culture, and that use strategies that have been shown to increase community safety and reduce crime.

Tip: Go strong and early on urgency + solutions + data



Move from this



To this

Eye rolls & with (endless) data about problems	→	Balance, focus on opportunity
Calling out disparities (or leaving them unsaid)	→	Explaining how what surrounds us, shapes us & creates inequality
Leading with adolescent brain development	→	Talk about how identities & social/emotional skills are developing
Leaving out explanation	→	Use discovery metaphor to explain what is going on and how it works
Focusing on individual success & wellbeing, right now	→	2-way community connections, include now & later

RESOURCES

Core Story of Adolescence Toolkit

www.frameworksinstitute.org/toolkit/the-core-story-of-adolescence/

Connections and Communities: Reframing How we talk about Opportunity Youth

www.frameworksinstitute.org/publication/connections-and-communities-reframing-how-we-talk-about-opportunity-youth/

Framing Fundamentals

www.frameworksinstitute.org/framing-fundamentals/

Reframing Parenting Toolkit

www.parentingrc.org.au/tools/reframing-parenting/

Reframing the Early Years: Mini-Toolkit Developed for the Queensland Framing Champions Group

www.tqkp.org.au/resources/reframing-the-early-years-mini-toolkit/

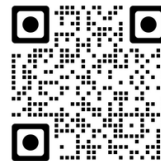
Framing Checklist (Queensland Kids Partnership)

www.tqkp.org.au/resources/framing-checklist/

For more information visit the:

Framing for Change Learning Hub

The Learning Hub has been collated by the Queensland Kids Partnership Framing Initiative as a central repository of framing research reports, toolkits, guides, webinars and examples - to support all of our work with children, families and communities.



www.tqkp.org.au/framing-for-change-learning-hub/

Reframing Youth Issues:

Mini-Toolkit Developed for the Queensland Framing Champions Group

This toolkit was designed and written by the FrameWorks Institute, a nonprofit that conducts social science research to understand and solve important communications challenges. FrameWorks' research on framing communications about child, youth and family policy was conducted in partnership with the Queensland Kids Partnership and Queensland Family and Child Commission.

If you are communicating to drive positive change for children, young people and families you have permission to use the elements and ideas in this toolkit for your purposes. All other rights are reserved by the FrameWorks Institute, according to these Terms of Use. FrameWorks Institute. (2024). Reframing Youth Issues: Mini-Toolkit Developed for the Queensland Framing Champions Group. FrameWorks Institute. Please follow standard APA rules for citation, with the FrameWorks Institute as publisher.

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