

Tips to connect and engage young people

- Start with the idea that we can all learn from each other and respect goes both ways. Listen nonjudgmentally.
- Don't talk at or pay lip-service or just do 'tick the box' youth consultation. Be authentic and genuinely interested.
- Use technology if you can- ask them for help. Phones are their 'community' and connection to their friends. Work with that.
- Share your stories- help young people imagine different futures. eg 2020 with bushfires and Covid 19 has been challenging. We found in intergenerational conversations, that hearing from people who had lived through wars, polio epidemic, migration experiences etc was very important in helping young people learn that it IS possible to thrive after adversity. Help them learn how you managed the challenges in your life through stories – don't lecture!
- Be in the business of helping kids grow up well and help them build resilience. It is a myth that kids have it easy now - we ALL live in our own time and each period has its own deep challenges. Growing up in the twenty-first century can be very tough and complex.
- Share interests and provide real and authentic opportunities. This is the time that young people need to build skills and be supported by their communities. (Uncertainties caused by Covid, high unemployment, climate challenges are concerning for many young people.)
- Really know your young people as they change and grow. If they go away to study or work appreciate that they WILL change, and they may challenge you but turn that into a positive. We need to learn to think differently and respect their learning. Take their knowledge seriously.
- We also need to get out of the way to let them lead, to create their future. Don't be the person or organisation that constantly says no to new ideas. Make spaces and mentor without lecturing. Help them build their online business or skills for work. Offer to help - do a skills audit in your community group. Make a website or Facebook page to show you care and can teach/share life skills (simple to complex things- how to write a good CV, how to cook a great pavlova, fix something, run a business). Make a list of things you need help with too. Build a multigenerational helping/sharing/learning place.
- We have to make certain that young people hear great things about living in rural Australia. If they are surrounded by complaining people, they will not want to come back. Andrew Fuller, psychologist, says 'adults need to have fun for kids to want to grow up.' (We need to make being an adult something worth aiming for). We need to celebrate our great rural communities and make them attractive places to young people.
- Learn together. Build communities together. Celebrate each other's strengths and help young people create the future that they need and want.

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