Write your own DNA

A group program to help young people live with vitality and strength

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This program uses the DNA-v model for youth development from the resource The Thriving Adolescent by Louise Hayes and Joseph Ciarrochi.


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About the program

This is a group protocol that can be used for groups of adolescents in schools, community settings, or group therapy programs.

The aim of this group program is to use the DNA-v program to help young people develop psychological flexibility, which is the ability to do what they care about even if they have difficult thoughts and feelings.

Facilitators need a sound understanding of DNA-v, should be familiar with working with adolescents, and have experience in group facilitation. For further training and reading see www.thrivingadolescent.com. It is recommended that facilitators read the literature on DNA-v and perhaps attend either face to face or online training (see www.thrivingadolescent.com or www.louisehayes.com.au).

It also helps to be familiar with the literature and the Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (www.contextualpsychology.org).
**Recommended readings**

**Books -**


**Downloads -**


Session 1 – What’s this program about

Equipment

- Pens
- DNA-V work booklet – 1 per student
- Video from Ze-Frank available on YouTube here - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwNJZUZft-U

Aim for the session – Get to know each other and program purpose

The aim for session one is to get to know each other and provide the group with an understanding of what to expect over the course of the group program. Build a deeper understanding about ourselves and those around us

- Know and care for ourselves and each other
- Introduce DNA-v and the concept of choice
- Discuss group rules, confidentiality and respect for each other
- Work together with respect and compassion

Throughout the program, provide some guidelines and time for the group to write in their handouts/workbooks. This is important to reinforce what they are learning, as a reminder of learnings from the group, and for reflective at home tasks later in the sessions.

Content to cover in the session

Key points to cover in the section:

- Facilitators begin by introducing themselves and explaining what the group will be about.
- Introduce concept of writing your own DNA.
- Explain that these sessions are about learning to write your own DNA
- Explain what we mean by DNA-v – it is the basic building blocks within each of us – but in this course it is the D, N and A of everything you do
- Just like DNA gets expressed, these sessions and the handbook will be about how your DNA skills help you to express your best self
- Provide each student with a workbook
- Introduce DNA experientially “Let me show you what I mean”
Being yourself

Facilitator emphasises that students will be writing their “own” handbook for life.

Begin by showing the following video and facilitating a discussion about trying to be what others want you to be.

- Show Video from Ze-Frank available on YouTube here - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwNJZUFt-U

Discussion:

- Ask the group, “Who tells you how to be you?”
- Prompt for answers if necessary – friends, Mum, Dad, teachers, grandparents, siblings, coach, media, ourselves.
- Ask them – “So who should be writing that handbook on how to be you?”

Introducing what we mean by DNA?

Sample dialogue:

You are going to learn that we don't have to fit into someone else's view of us, we write our own handbook, and we can learn to do this with something we call DNA-v.

We all know DNA is the basic building blocks of life. It influences our eye colour and height.

We are going to talk about a different DNA.

It’s the DNA of what we do, think, feel. It’s things you can learn about yourself which can help you to write your own handbook on life. It can help you learn how to be you when stuff gets hard or in the way. We hope you can have some fun while we learn stuff together.

Introducing yourself

Facilitator should spend some time introducing themselves and their responsibilities regarding confidentiality.

Sample dialogue:

- As some of you may know, my role at the school is ...
- As part of my role ...

Be sure to discuss confidentiality and limits of the group. Always plan to do this so that if a risk or harm issue arises the young people know what will happen and do not feel betrayed.
Using social DNA-v to form the group

Facilitators should spend some time discussing the expectations for the group, inside and outside of the sessions.

Guideline for the discussion:

Begin by asking the group, “what makes a good group.”

As they talk, draw a big DNA-v disc on a white board, and begin modelling DNA-v as a group by writing in the appropriate spaces, i.e. fit their answers under D, N or A (no need to explain too much about what DNA-v mean at this point).

In V you can write any values statements –for example, being respectful to each other, learning, caring etc. Simply reframe the young people’s suggestions into values behaviours – getting respect becomes being respectful.

In A you can write any rules they come up with – for example, avoid gossiping

In N write feelings and present moment awareness examples that they come up with – for example, noticing how others feel

In D, you can write down rules they come up with for overt group behaviour – for example, not talking over each other.

Finally, return to confidentiality –

“Sometimes you might have an issue you don’t feel okay to share in the group, but want to talk about. You might be worried about something that feels too big to say in front of everyone, or you may not be sure about. The best way is to talk with one of the facilitators after the group, or if it feels really urgent, ask one of us if you can go out and talk privately during the group. “

Then ask the young people to come up with their own rules for confidentiality outside the group. You can write these in A too.

The Challenge of Choosing

Game of Life Part 1

This game is from Get out of your mind and into your life for teens (Ciarrochi, L. Hayes & Bailey, 2012). The aim of this activity is to allow everyone to experience the problem with no choice/choice about what happens in their lives. You can download the image for the game of life here: http://thrivingadolescent.com/adolescent-resources/thriving-adolescent-book-downloads/..
Key steps:

- Ask participants to pick 4 numbers (or 6 depending on time) between 1 and 63 and write them down in their handbook.
- Then, with a bit of fanfare, show The Game of Life on the screen. Tell participants that with those 4 numbers they will find out what happens to their life. Facilitators should participate in the game as well.
- Participants should write their destiny in their handbook.
- Facilitators should give everyone the opportunity to share their destiny.
- Discuss what it felt like to have no control.
Sample dialogue:

Let’s see how your lives turned out. Who would like to go first and tell us what you did with your life?

Did anyone find themselves wishing they had chosen a “5” instead of a “6” so they could have “wisdom” instead of “addiction”?

What was it like to have chance in charge of your life?

Who is happy with this life, with these random choices – (maybe one person is happy others aren’t).

Regardless of whether you are happy or not, here’s my questions:

- do you want to be the one who choses?
- or do you want it chosen for you?

Let’s do that now and see what choosing for ourselves feels like.

**The Game of Life Part 2**

Invite participants to look at the board again and chose which 4 (or 6 depending on time) squares they would like as their destiny. Only 4 though.

Get them to write them down in their group handbook.

**Facilitators can create a group discussion -- elicit some discussion of the different experience when you are choosing with thoughtfulness rather than random.** This exercise gives participants the experience of taking some choice in their lives.

Sample dialogue:

What did you notice this time? What did it feel like? How do you feel now compared to when your destiny was random?

What would it be like to go through life having things randomly chosen for you?

There are lots of reasons why this apparent randomness happens to people, but mostly it is because they haven’t learnt how to pause and listen to them hear. Instead they listen to their minds telling them they can’t do things, or that trying is too scary, or it is too hard. So instead of choosing thoughtfully, they just react to what is around them.

We are pretty sure you don’t want to live your life in this random way, so we are going to work on that now.

**Facilitators discuss the importance of choosing. For example:**
A lot of the work we are going to do is about choosing.

Has anyone noticed that choosing can be quite hard?

Why? – prompt responses (risk getting it wrong, looking silly, being judged, getting it right can be scary too)

There are lots of choices today – even choosing jeans takes a lot of effort because there are so many styles

Many people won’t even think about choosing how they want to be. They just keep doing.

We are not only afraid of others we are also afraid of ourselves. For example, sometimes we avoid even thinking about being good at something in case it never happens. And the only person who will know we are thinking it is us.

Key message – Choosing is hard. Thoughtful choosing is even harder, but learning to consider what you care about (values) is worth it.

Using Social DNA-v for group formation Part 2

Facilitators can return to the DNA-v disc they drew up on the board earlier with the group rules and spend some time introducing each component of DNA-V in relation to the young people’s thoughts and feelings during the session.

Invite everyone to write a few notes on the DNA-v model in their workbook.

Sample discussion:

V  stands for value or vitality, it means what we care about, or what is in our hearts.

What are we here for? What do you hope this can be about? What do you hope that we might achieve by spending a couple of hours together? (examples get along with people, learn about myself, be happier at school)

We’ll learn a lot more later, but for now, let’s also get out the negative stuff that happens when we are in a group like this:

A stands for the advice we give ourselves. So, as you were calling these answers out, what are the negative things you might be thinking about. (If the group is hesitant you can ask what a “friend” might think about themselves, you can make a joke of it – “I have a friend who has a friend who thinks this group is stupid”). Let’s just write some thoughts here (negative about this group) for example this might be crap, boring, waste of time,

Facilitators should add their own thoughts too for example you might hate me, you might not get it.
As you speak include any judgements others might make about you, for example that was a stupid thing to say.

N refers to our ability to pause, instead of react, and notice what’s going on inside ourselves, with others, and with those around us. What have you noticed so far? In yourself and in others around you? (if reluctant you can ask what “friend” might be feeling and make a joke of it – “I have a friend who has a friend who is anxious in this group”). Include inside noticing feelings – what do you notice in your body for example embarrassed, butterflies, scared, etc. Include outside noticing. for example what others in the group seems like (avoid evaluations of others at this stage).

D stands for the things we discover or things we do. Let’s consider some of the things we do in a group like this if we are worried or nervous, i.e. the impulsive, unthinking, or acting out things we might do in a group like this. What do you do? For examples blurt stuff out, not put your hand up, be silent, stay out of the discussion.

Notice that all of us have negative thoughts, feelings and actions. Every one of us can relate to these things.

Now, return to V and gently summarise. For example when all this negative stuff is going on, what happens to what we care about? And what happens to our decisions about how we want our group to be? Notice that all of this is normal and we all do it. In this group we are going to learn all about that.

Spend some time emphasising that this is all normal, and something that we all experience.

Home task

- Ask students to spend some time this week noticing what happens when they have to make choices. How often it happens, is it difficult or easy, what do they think when they have to choose, how do they feel before and after making a choice

Ending the session

- Check for questions or comments
- Check their understanding of where the home practice task goes in the handbook
- Thank everyone
- Make sure they have put their name on the workbook
- Consider collecting the workbooks up and bringing them next week
- Reminder that anyone who is worried or concerned can connect after the session.
Session 2 - The Noticer

Equipment

- Pens and DNA-V handbook for each student
- YouTube clips –
  1. Free hugs in Santorini - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN8CKwdosjE
  2. Baby responding to dad evil laugh - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YemitZJBT1Y

Aim for the session - The noticer as a process

Noticer is the process of becoming aware of our inner and outer experiences, appreciating our present context, and choosing our response.

Exercises that help a young person become more flexible with this noticer process will be helpful. Here are the key messages and content to cover:

- Introduce and experientially help young people get in touch with their own noticer
- Learn that we all have noticer skills,
- Introduce basic noticer steps – Normalise, practice A-N-D, practice allowing.
- Learning we can choose our response (even if it is hard)
- Learn that we can’t stop thoughts and emotions, and struggling is part of the problem
- Learning to appreciate the present moment
- Normalise and create awareness that we each have noticer behaviours, and they can be the same or different in a situation

Recap and Reflection

- Briefly welcome everyone back.
- Invite students to reflect on last week (session 1) for example what did we learn?
- Remind them of the key message from last session: We get to choose our path, but choosing is hard.
- Check if anyone has examples from home practice. What did they notice about choosing? How often did you have to choose? Was it difficult or easy? What did they think when they had to choose, how did they feel before and after making a choice?

Step 1 - Normalising the Noticer
We begin this session with open discussion on how our noticer is trained by the world, and a simple noticer skill that allows the students to easily see that they have noticer skills.

**We are all noticers**

Sample introduction:

Invite the students to stand up, notice their feet on the floor, notice a spot of dirt on the ceiling, and, then notice how their breath is right now.

This is noticing. We can all do it.

We are born as noticers but we lose the skill as we get older, so we will have to train ourselves to become better at noticing. This can be useful when you have thoughts or feelings that are difficult, or something makes you feel anxious and worried.

**You have a message**

Sample dialogue:

Your noticer is just like my mobile phone (hold up phone). My phone is constantly getting messages, searching for messages, pinging when it gets on.

What can you do if you don’t want any messages on my phone?

Invite answers and use these prompts to playfully guide discussion:

1. You can smash it. But that means you get no calls or messages ever.

2. Block the caller – but if they really want to get hold of you what will they do (use someone else’s phone)? If it was your mum for example what would she do if you blocked her?

3. You can put it on silent so you can’t hear it. But if it’s on silent what happens if your best friend is trying to get hold of you?

**Discuss how all of these strategies will help you avoid the calls or messages, and they will work in the short term, but are not very effective in the long term.**

For example if we avoiding all calls/messages it might work for you in that minute, but it makes things worse in the longer term (like blocking your mum’s calls). What we know is that the message is not the problem, the problem is trying to avoid the message.

Now consider, your noticer skill, or what you notice inside you, is something like this. Many of us have grown up in a world where we haven’t learned how to use our feelings, how to listen to the message, so we try to block them, to shut off our feelings, to ignore them etc.
Imagine not learning to hear your own body’s messages? Maybe this would be like someone handing someone from the 17th century a mobile phone. What would they do with it? Prompt for discussions on what they might do.

We have all learned how to use our noticer skills to manage our feelings. But first we need to look at what we have learned. Maybe, like the 17th century phone user, we have no connection to the “network”, in this case the wisdom that is our body.

How have you been told to cope with your feelings? What have you heard or learned to do with them? Give time to explore this. Prompts include – controlling them, distracting yourself, pretending they are not there, playing video games, obsessing about social media etc.

Discuss the ineffectiveness of these agendas. How well does that work? Short term and longer term {what if they never had sadness or were never afraid of anything}

**Step 2 - Practice at awareness, naming and describing noticer sensations**

**Remember to breathe**

One of the easiest and most convenient ways to practice being a noticer is to just pause and take a slow breath.

Ask young people to do that now with you. Simply pause and take a slow breath. Allow enough time for them all to do this.

Discuss with young people that their breath helps to manage their body. When they are stressed, afraid, or angry their breath becomes quick. Learning to take a slow breath can help us. Remind them that we do not mean breathe in really deeply, just take a nice slow breath before responding.

As you deliver the remainder of the sessions, occasionally drop in this slow breath practice.

**Practice A-N-D**

This next exercise teaches the basic steps of becoming aware of ourselves, learning to name the sensations and describe our feelings. To do this we use two very different YouTube clips that will create different sensations and feelings in the participants.

Sample dialogue:

The first one uses the acronym A-N-D, that’s DNA backwards. It stands for Aware, Name and Describe.
You may think this sounds really dumb, but we know in the research it is linked to so many good outcomes and helps people listen and use their noticer messages. Research shows us this is a really helpful skill, it helps people manage stress and become less reactive.

I’m going to show you two little YouTube clips and ask you to do is A-N-D as you watch each one.

Aware – this is become aware of your breath,

Name – is name the sensation, e.g. you might become aware of butterflies in your stomach, or jump in surprise, or a gasp of breath

Describe – this is simply to describe if the awareness and naming is connected to a feeling. For example, butterflies in your stomach might be a feeling like, “I am nervous now”.

Play the Free hugs in Santorini YouTube clip and facilitate discussion of A-N-D in response they had while watching. (see equipment section)

Play the baby responding to dad evil laugh YouTube clip and facilitate discussion of A-N-D in response here too. (see equipment section)

Key points to discuss:

- We respond inside our bodies as we watch
- We can be the same or different in our noticing
- We change our response when we see emotions in others
- Discuss how the response comes and goes, this can be quickly or slowly but it always passes.

Step 3 - Allow or respond to noticer signals

The final step in building noticer skills is to help young people discover that they don’t need to automatically respond to all feeling signals, control them, be afraid of them, or distract from them. With practice they can learn to either allow the feeling to be there, or learn to respond with awareness.

Seaweed goes with the ocean¹ – An exercise in allowing or responding

This exercise aims to help young people experientially understand their choice with feelings and sensations. Stand or sit with the group and act this out together. We find acting things out really

helps young people to understand the concepts, whereas talking is just loading into what every other adults does – tell them what to do. Sure you will feel silly at first, but we have found it really works. However, if you want, you can also do this as an eyes closed meditation.

Sample dialogue:

Ask everyone to stand with eyes closed or looking at the floor so they don't feel too silly and get the giggles.

Imagine you are a seaweed plant. You are strong and have been growing for a long time with your roots firmly anchored into the sea floor.

Today the sea is calm and moving only a small amount, so you are gently swaying back and forward, it is very peaceful. Notice how it feels to be swaying gently and going with the ocean.

Eyes closed, continue talking this way for about 30 seconds, swaying gently together.

Now along comes a big wave, many big waves. You sway back and forward powerfully moved by the waves, you are moving with them. Your roots are firmly planted into the seabed. You simply go with the ocean, moving back and forward. It is a powerful sea today. Notice how it feels to be rocking with the waves.

Eyes closed, continue talking to simulate the strong waves for about 30 seconds.

Now imagine massive waves crashing over you and this time you want to fight them, you don't want to be rocked by the waves, so you stand rigid. Imagine the waves crashing around you. Notice the effort it takes to force yourself to stay still while waves crash all around.

Standing rigid, imagining the force of waves, simulating struggle, for about 20 seconds.

Once more the sea becomes calm and you go back to gently swaying, rocking with the peaceful ocean. Notice how it feels to be swaying gently and going with the ocean.

Once the exercise is over, ask the young person to describe what it felt like to be swaying gently, then strongly, and then fighting the waves.

They should notice that fighting the waves takes a lot of effort, far more than allowing oneself to be rocked back and forward by strong waves.

Gently relate this back to their emotions. Allowing emotions to come and go is like going with the waves, sometimes it is gentle, sometimes it is powerful, but going with the waves is always much easier than standing rigid and fighting against them. Emotions are like this, going with them is sometimes easy, sometimes hard, but never as hard as trying to fight them.

Create new rules for feelings

We can help young people with new rules for feelings. For example:

- All feelings are normal
- All feelings are ok
Feelings just are
This too shall pass

Facilitate discussion with the group on what they find helpful to say to themselves. Remember we always need to hold all rules lightly.

**Noticer isn’t just about Feelings**

Facilitate a group discussion on how our noticer can help us be aware of how our bodies are responding to the world.

- Notice how your body revs up with stress, exams etc.
- Notice how it changes when you go for a walk, get some exercise, play a sport
- Notice what happens with fast music, slow music, sad music

Discuss how movement can help us in lots of ways. For example, one treatment that works well for depression is exercise.

Discuss how others influence our noticer.

- Being seen and heard by others is important to all humans.
- We all need other people; much of our stress comes from interactions with other people, but they also help to soothe and calm us.
- A big feeling or problem can change when you tell someone.

**Notice the noticer game – Social DNA-V**

Humans have a unique capacity to understand other peoples’ feelings, but they can also be way off in their guesses, and sometimes they can project their own feelings onto others. This next exercise helps young people experience this ‘mind reading’ ability we all have, and increase their perspective taking of another’s experience. The important message is that we can ‘mind-read,’ but we always need to check our guesses out. Sometimes we are wrong. Sometimes in shared experience we assume another feels as we do. Sometimes we project our own feelings on to others.

Instructions:

Ask everyone to stand up and get into groups of four.

Give everyone a piece of paper with the number 1, 2, 3 or 4 on it. Ask them not to reveal what number they have.

Show a slide, or write on a board, the roles that are assigned for each number, as follows:

1 = emoter
2 = receiver
3 and 4 are noticers.

In the task, the emoter imagines themselves in a situation where they have strong feelings, but don’t want others to see it. For example, imagine a time when something has gone wrong or made you
upset and you go to school and try to hide how you feel. You still feel it, but you don’t want anyone to see.

The receiver’s task is to guess which of the group has the feeling.

The noticers task is to be just that, someone in the group not doing anything but noticing. If they guess the emotion of the receiver, they should not say it out loud. That is the task of the receiver

Have the group just stand and chat for a minute or so, and when the receiver is ready they can try and guess which one is the emoter. Remind them that this is a game so they can do this playfully.

Once they have done the first round, ask them to redistribute their numbered roles, shake it up, and choose another role for round 2.

Have the groups engage in a few rounds.

When the game is over, discuss the following:

- How did you guess? What clues did you use?
- Was it easy or hard?
- Did it change if you knew the person?
- Then generalise this out to real life: What is it like when you are having a big feeling and hoping that someone sees it and helps you? What is it like when you are having a big feelings and hoping no one sees?
- Discuss how sometimes you feel like everyone can see through you. Maybe they can, maybe they can’t.

Home task

- Ask students to spend some time this week practicing the 3 noticer steps AND
- Become aware of their breath, or their breath; Name the sensation, e.g. butterflies in stomach, or fast heart rate; Describe what they are feeling for example, butterflies in your stomach might be a feeling like, “I am nervous now”.
- Ask if they can create some new rules for feelings. For example: All feelings are normal, All feelings are ok, Feelings just are, This too shall pass

Ending the session

- Check Home Task is written in their workbook
- Check for questions or comments
- Thank everyone
- Consider collecting the workbooks up and bringing them next week
  Reminder that anyone who is worried or concerned can connect after the session.
Session 3 – The Adviser

Equipment

- Pens and DNA-V handbook for each student
- Whiteboard marker (for Woo Pen exercises) and explain activity to a co-facilitator or staff member (brief “the pen says woo” with a staff member prior to the group starting)
- Post-it notes
- Cards with examples of statements for “Lions in the Grass activity”
- Bo Burnham poem Magic on an overhead (optional)

Aim of the session - The advisor as a process

The advisor is the process of helping people to navigate their context with language. This includes behaviours of predicting instead of using trial and error, beliefs, judgements, rules, evaluations, and problem solving. In other words, the advisor uses what we have learned from the past to help us navigate our present and future. The whole point of the advisor is to keep us from making mistakes, especially the ones that get us killed.

We introduce a metaphor to represent this behaviour group as ‘our advisor’ or “how we give ourselves advice”.

There are four key steps to using the advisor flexibly, they include:

1. Normalise the advisor’s ‘watching out’ function
2. Deciding the helpfulness of our own advice, rules and self-talk, based on whether it helps with vitality and value
3. Learning to unhook if stuck. We begin with stepping out of advisor to noticer or discoverer
4. Learning to create helpful rules and evaluations

Again, we could use many exercises to help young people learn these 4 steps.

Recap and Reflection

- Briefly welcome everyone back.
- Briefly recap the Noticer from last session.
- Ask the group to discuss what they noticed between the sessions.
- Ask if anyone has examples of the 3 steps of the noticer from home practice
**Step 1 Introducing the normality of the advisor**

Begin by asking if the group are willing to engage in some funny and weird experiments and games. Then without too much explanation, start the Lion in the Grass exercise.

**Survivor game (Hayes, L. & Ciarrochi, 2015)**

The purpose of this activity is to develop an understanding of the usefulness of the advisor and why we humans evolved with language. It protects us from harm and keep us safe. The activity demonstrates what happened to previous generations of humans who ignored their advisor, and shows we are descended from generations of humans with protective advisors.

Instructions

Ask for five volunteers.

One student will be the tribal warrior faced with a lion.

The 4 others will be a different type of inner voice (language and thinking). Hand each participant a card with some example statements to prompt them. Ask them not to reveal their role or what is written on the card.

The silent advisor – the person really has no advisor here

The obedient advisor - to the obedient advisor is negative and threat oriented, but when you tell it to shut up, it shuts up.

The Mellow advisor – This advisor sees some negative things but mostly is relaxed and likes to focus on the positive

The Advisor – our super sensitive, always on the ball, typical danger avoiding advisor

Everyone else will be lions trying to eat the tribal warrior.

Ask the tribal warrior to choose a ‘helper’ and their job is to work together to try and get past the lions to the food on the other side. Instruct the ‘helpers’ to take on the persona and use the prompts on the card to help the tribal warrior reach the food.

You create a battle each time to see which advisor is better: silent advisor versus advisor (but to keep the mystery you may say, “the silent advisor versus another kind of advisor”. Then do obedient advisor versus advisor. With obedient advisor, you get the young person to literally turn to the helper and say shut up. The helper shuts up. Then with the “other” advisor, the person says shut up but the advisor does not shut up.
The final battle is between the mellow advisor and the advisor.

The silent advisor says nothing. They happily walk up to the lions. They will die.

The obedient advisor is as negative as the real advisor. The person is to turn to the helper and say shut up to the obedient advisor. The advisor shuts up. So when a lion shows up in the distance, they don’t shout a warning. It’s been shut up. They will die.

The mellow advisor can’t be shut up, but is very laid-back, sees dangers but doesn’t really worry about them. Misses some dangers. Can only afford to miss one danger. They will die.

The advisor never shuts up, it is constantly looking for danger and is quite forceful. It keeps making negative comments and stops the warrior from moving forward. The warrior survives.

Facilitators should discuss the purpose and usefulness of each inner voice. For example:

- Discuss the characteristics of each inner voice, what happened to them and why?
- Which inner voice do you wish you had?
- Which one will keep you alive?
- Which one to you actually have?

Summarize the purpose and usefulness of the advisor.

Sample dialogue

For you to be here, your ancestors had to make zero fatal mistakes before they produced children—zero mistakes across thousands of years. We are the children of the children of the children of those surviving tribal bands. Our advisors have saved us. If your life depended on making zero mistakes, would you rather have an advisor that’s too negative and sensitive, or an inner voice that is laid-back and sometimes makes mistakes?

**Step 2 Appreciate the helpfulness of our advisor**

**Advisor adapted - Pen says Woo exercise**

This exercise is an adaptation from the book, Get out of your mind and into your life (Hayes, S. C. & Smith, 2005)

Instructions:
Give a whiteboard marker to a staff member and ask them to hold it up. Tell the students this pen is magical and it can speak. It says “woo”. Explain that from now on whenever they see the pen they should say “Woo”. Practice a few times. Have fun with it.

Throughout the remainder of the session, ask the staff member to randomly hold up the pen over the course of the group.

At some later point, after a few opportunities to respond to the pen with “woo”, facilitators should stop and discuss. For example:

- How quickly the students associate the pen and “woo”
- How easy it is to train an advisor, even with silly things.
- How they can’t stop it happening and how they can’t “shut it up”
- How helpful is it to keep saying “woo”?

Discuss how helpful thoughts connect us to what we care about, whereas unhelpful rules or thoughts often come from random things, ‘like pen says woo’. In these moments we can decide whether the rules we have are helpful for connecting us with meaning, and if they are not, we can step out of them and into the noticer space, take a breath and just become aware of our advisor.

**Watching your advisor at work**

This exercise is an adaptation from the book, Things might go terribly horribly wrong (DuFrene & Wilson, 2010)

**Instructions**

Tell the group you are going to time them for one minute. Invite them to close their eyes and count each breath. Every time they get distracted by a thought, or start problem solving, thinking about the future, or working out if they are doing it right, they need to go back to zero and begin counting again.

Stop after one minute.

Facilitators should ask them what happened. For example:

- Did count any higher than 3? How high?
- What distracted them?
- Did they become aware of their advisor chatting? Problem solving? Working out what to do next?
- Where their thoughts always useful and profound, or sometimes just chatter?
- Discuss how our advisors job is to pump out thoughts. You might choose to relate this to the role of the heart which is to pump blood.

Generalise from the exercise to their lives with discussion:

- Who do you talk to the most? Answer – You.
• Is your advisor like your best friend, your worst enemy, or both? Answer – Even when we are critical our advisor is usually looking out for us in some weird way.

Wrap it up discussion

Sample dialogue -

So we know the advisor is meant to help us, it doesn’t control us, but it is pretty powerful, very active and quite hard to ignore. Let’s do a few more things to get to know our advisor minds a little better so it doesn’t push us around so much.

Step 3 Games to unhook from the advisor

The next step is to help young people practice defusing from their advisor when it seems they are stuck. One of the easiest ways to do this is to simply step out of the advisor and into the noticer or discoverer.

Give your Advisor a Microphone exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that, at times, everyone has a critical advisor, even though we often think we are the only person who has one. It is adapted from the work of Rikke Kjelgaard and Kelly Wilson (www.humanact.se)

Instructions:

Facilitators take a post it note and write down a critical inner thought that provides appropriate levels of self-disclosure. Reveal your post it note message and tell the group when/how this thought seems to pop up. (common examples are “I am not good enough”, “I am dumb/ugly/useless”)

Give each student a post-it note.

Invite them to write down something critical that their advisor says to them. Ask them to disguise their hand writing so nobody knows what they have written. Explain that they will be collected up anonymously by a staff member. Collect the post-it notes and display them all on the wall.

Optional - while the post it notes are being put on the wall, show a video of notes written by a group of high school students, explain these were just regular students attending class. Give your advisor the microphone video, available here http://thrivingadolescent.com/adolescent-resources/new-ideas-for-you/video-ideas/

Give the students a chance to get up and read what their peers have written about themselves. This can feel quite serious but it is an opportunity to show the normality of our struggle.
Facilitators should discuss how hurtful these thoughts are, but how common they are. For example:

- What did you notice?
- Did they notice any similarities?
- How many do you have?

Important messages for discussion:
- Consider asking the group to write a few notes in their workbook
- We all have critical inner thoughts, each one of us could come up with several messages
- It isn’t bad that our advisor is critical, the problem is that we make ourselves strangers to each other by hiding and thinking that we are alone, or pretending we are always positive.
- Our advisor’s job is to point out our weaknesses so we get better, this is far more effective than always being positive. Positive and negative are useful.
- Sometimes, we do get overly critical and there are things we can do to help ourselves.

My advisor sounds like....... 

This next exercise can build some new ways of thinking about our inner self talk. Use the ‘magic’ poem by Bo Burnham to get the advisors using different voices. Explore with further questions such as:

- What did you notice happen as you read?
- What does your advisor sound like?
- Use prompts to identify what their own advisor sounds like (Yoda, a GPS, Eddie Murphy, George Costanza’s mother from Seinfeld, my mum)

Poem for My Adviser Sounds Like activity

**magic**

Read this to yourself. Read it silently.
Don’t move your lips. Don’t make a sound.
Listen to yourself. Listen without hearing anything.
What a wonderfully weird thing, huh?

NOW MAKE THIS PART LOUD!
SCREAM IT IN YOUR MIND!
DROWN EVERYTHING OUT.

Now hear a whisper. A tiny whisper.

Now, read this next line with your best crotchety-old-man voice:

“Hello there, sonny. Does your town have a post office?”
Awesome! Who was that? Whose voice was that?
Certainly not yours.

How do you do that? How?
Must be magic

Bo Burnham

**Step 4 Create helpful rules on the use of the advisor**

*Become a DNA-v shifter*

Learning to use the advisor well requires testing, modifying and where necessary creating new rules for ourselves. We can create new DNA-v rules, such as “I can learn to be a DNA-V shifter”, Or “I am capable of building friendships”. We can test out rules by stepping into the discoverer space and trying them, then modifying or creating new rules based on what our experience shows us.

We ask them –

- When you are stuck:
  - Can you step into noticing, take a breath, and just become aware of your self-talk?
  - Can you step into discovery and try to do something new or different?

- As you become aware of your advisor, consider if your self-talk is helping you to connect with vitality, protecting you, or something else.

**You get to choose when to listen to the advisor**

Instructions

Have students stand and get into pairs.

Ask them to choose which one of the dyad will be the advisor. Playfully point out that their advisor would be at work already trying to decide if they want this role or not. The other person becomes a ‘person’.

For one minute the advisor gets to tell the person what to do (e.g. do star jumps, talk in a French accent etc.) and they must do exactly what their advisor says. With 2 rules, they must stay in the room, and they cannot be mean.

Now, explain they are going to do the same thing for a second minute, but this time the ‘person’ gets to use their noticer and a new advisor rule, “I can just be aware, I don’t have to do it”.

Later, tell them that they can choose whether or not they want to do it. Once again have the advisor tell the person what to do. And allow the person to step into noticer, or to just observe their advisor rules and choose if they want to obey.
Discussion should include:

- Sometimes it is nice just to do what the advisor says, choosing can be hard
- What happens to their advisor when we didn’t follow what they said – “they got louder, more insistent etc.”
- Discuss how our inner voice can be just like this. If we try to ignore it, sometimes it gets louder and it ‘seems’ as if we must obey, but we always get to step into the noticer space, pause and take a breath, or step to the discoverer space and choose a new activity to do.

Home task

- Ask students to spend time this week “getting to know” their advisors by listening to it.
- Ask if they can identify patterns and increase awareness.
- Ask them to notice what happens if they step into their noticer space and breathe.
- Ask them what happens if they think about the helpfulness of the rule in terms of connecting with what they care about?

Ending the session

- Check home practice is written in the workbook
- Check for questions or comments
- Thank everyone
- Consider collecting the workbooks up and bringing them next week
- Reminder that anyone who is worried or concerned can connect after the session.
Prompts for the Lions in the Grass game

**THE SILENT ADVISOR** – you don’t do anything to help.
Just stand there and don’t help at all

**THE OBEDIENT ADVISOR** – you see that problems and dangers, but you shut up when you are told to. Say things like this to annoy your person:

“That looks risky”
“What do you think we should do here?”
“Do you think it’s safe?”
– and shut up when your person tells you to

**THE MELLOW VOICE** – You see some things but nothing really bothers you.

“Is that a lion, nah, I think it’s just grass”
“Am I going to miss dinner – nah they’ll wait for me”
“Am I going to get killed – no it will be fine”

**THE ADVISOR** – You watch out for danger and report it very loudly and forcefully. You won’t be silenced.

“There is danger over there”
“It’s too dangerous”
“Don’t do that, you might get killed”
“Wait a minute”
“Stop it’s too risky”
SESSION 4 - DISCOVERER

Equipment

- YouTube clip of baby responding to mum blowing her nose https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBppBPvMTk8
- YouTube clip we are all scared - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmAekTPD5c
- Sweets or chocolate that cannot be easily identified. For example: War Heads (extreme sours) taken out of their packets, or salted chocolate.
- Strength cards – either one set for a group of 4 or 5, or one set each person. These can be downloaded free from – http://thrivingadolescent.com/2016/01/19/strength-spotting-card-sort-free-download/

Aim of the session - The Discoverer as a process

The aim of the session is to introduce the Discoverer. This is the process helping young people to explore in order to develop skills and resources, and expand their context. It includes:

Beginning steps include:

- tracking what is working (ABC)
- building strengths
- creating values
- explore new and untested behaviour

Recap and Reflection

- Recap Advisor – a word we use to describe how we use our inner voice to navigate the present and predict the future.Looks for problems and danger. With a critical advisor we can make ourselves strangers to each other by assuming we are the only ones. What if we all knew that everyone is critical?
- Check examples of Advisor – did you try noticing your advisor? What happened?
- Recap Noticer – our ability, that we all have, to notice our inner and outer experiences and choose our reaction with awareness
- Check examples of Noticer – have you been able to notice and become aware of your feelings instead of just reacting? What happens?
What is adolescence for?

Begin with a discussion on why we humans might have an adolescence, covering the key tasks of adolescents and discussing what they might help us do. Some points to include:

- Human and animal adolescents share some similar characteristics, particularly risk taking, love of novelty, sensation seeking, and changes in relationships (read Ciarrochi and Hayes, L. (in press) for more information on evolution and adolescence and this important discoverer behaviour)
- Some of these characteristics help adolescents try adult roles.
- Some help to broaden and build strengths, testing out what we love, fail, and try again; e.g. a neat hair style one month, purple hair the next.
- Discuss how important it is to try many adult roles and behaviours in order to gain independence.
- Conclude with the idea that these things are the essence of the discoverer.

Meet your discoverer

Sample dialogue:

The discoverer is the part of us that learns by doing – we try new things, experiment and give things a go. Think of it like a baby learning to walk, standing up and falling down. That is a baby being a discoverer.

Now for teens, it’s all about trial and error, and learning as we go, and as we fail.

How do you think the advisor in you is going to feels about discoverer action? The advisor’s role of keeping us safe, using past learning, predicting, instead of trial and error learning. Summarise – your advisor probably won’t like some parts of this because its job is to keep us safe.

How does the discoverer get along with the noticer do you think? What happens to your feelings and inner sensations when you try new things?

We need flexible noticer skills because standing up for yourself, trying new things, taking risks, learning to be independent etc., all come with anxiety or fear of failure. Flexible noticer skills will help you cope with the strong emotions generated by discovering, including like worry, fear and embarrassment.

You should also recap flexible noticing skills – take a breath and notice what is going on in your body.

Ask them to think about a time when they have tried something new. How did you feel? Whenever you have tried something new you will always be anxious. Confidence comes AFTER that.
The discoverer is about looking at what we have been doing, trying things, seeing if they work out, seeing what we are really capable of, growing, getting stronger all of the time.

When we start to use all our DNA-v we learn to shift when we are stuck. When you get stuck you move, from discoverer, to noticer to adviser.

**Video on Baby reacting to mum blowing her nose**

Show the following YouTube clip and ask them to think about the baby’s discoverer and also what he might be feeling in this new experience.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBppBPvMTk8

Discussion on the video:

Sample dialogue

This baby is learning a brand new thing. Taking a risk of something new he has never experienced. He has fear in his body and yet he doesn’t run away. He feels the sensation, and his mum helps him stay with it. This is where we start as kids. The baby is taking baby risks. Now adolescent risk is a little different, there is adaptive risk vs maladaptive risk

Create an open discussion around the risks adolescence must face as they learn independence.

Key points to include are:

- Our aim with the discoverer is to broaden and build repertoires of behaviour. This includes fostering adaptive risk taking. Here we need to draw the distinction between adaptive and maladaptive risk.
- Adaptive risk includes things like stating your opinion, standing up for what you believe in, even if your opinion differs to others, not being a bystander to bullying, and learning to disagree. Risk doesn’t have to look like standing on a stage and singing to an audience or train surfing. It can also be learning to have your own mind and choose your behaviour. It begins with a voice, saying “I don’t want it to be like this.” And “I value and care about that”
- Maladaptive risk is reinforcing in the short term, but doesn’t work out for a young person in the long term. In other words, it doesn’t help build a life of vitality and value. It is important here to facilitate a discussion with the young people on what might be maladaptive vs adaptive, rather than telling them what they shouldn’t be doing. There is sufficient research showing that keying into young people’s need for vitality and value has better outcomes than advice on what not to do (Cohen, 2006; Sherman et al., 2013).

There are a whole lot of things you have to learn to be independent. A key is to learn how to manage the risk

**Seeing all D, N and A in a sweet exercise**

The purpose of this activity is to practice stepping across all the behaviours in D, N, and A. We do this by using a disguised sweet or chocolate.
Extreme sour sweets such as ‘War Head extreme sours’ or chocolate with unidentified flavours like salt or chilli work well.

Instructions:

Note: Before this activity, take the sweets out of the wrappers so they are not identifiable. Don’t let the group see them. Put them in bowl with a lid so they are hidden.

Shake the bowl so it makes a noise and ask the group to tell you what they think it is.

Identify the Advisor:

Whatever they guess is their advisor behaviour. Their history of learning what a noise like this might be (guesses will include sweets, buttons, marbles etc.) Then reveal what is in the bowl and get some more advisor evaluations (I don’t like them, I was right etc.). Ask about the Advisor – what is their mind saying? What judgements and evaluations are they forming? What is the advisor telling them to do? Is there any problems identified?

Hand out one sweet to each person. Request people don’t give it away if they work out what we are doing. Ask the group to wait for everyone before tasting.

Identify the Noticer:

Ask them to step into the noticer space. What does the sweet smell like? What body sensations are going on right now? What emotions or desires are they aware of?

Identify the Discoverer:

Now, step into the Discoverer space and see what the experience of eating it tells them. Was their experience the same as their advisor said or different? Some will be correct, some will be wrong, some will say it tasted better or worse than what they thought.

Summarise with discussion about how life lived with strength is one where we use all our D, N and A. And learn to change flexibly.

Discuss how the discoverer is about trying things, and your advisor or noticer won’t always be correct unless you try the experience. They can also use their discoverer to learn from experience, is this something that was good for them? Would they eat this again?

Building Strengths

Facilitators should introduce the concept of strengths. For more on this topic, read The Thriving Adolescent chapter on the Discoverer (Hayes, L. L. & Ciarrochi, 2015). Be clear that we are not referring to character strengths, rather we are attempting to build behaviours that you do. Not what you are. For example, I do kind things, not I am kind.
Strength cards – they can be downloaded free from this link -
http://thrivingadolescent.com/2016/01/19/strength-spotting-card-sort-free-download/

Instructions:

Divide the young people into groups of four. Put cards on the floor in the middle and ask each young person to choose 3 strengths they have. Or if they know each other well they can choose one they have and one they see in another person.

As they choose, ask them to be aware of what their adviser tells them (‘you really can’t choose that strength, people will disagree’) and also what they notice in their body and feelings (nervous etc.) and also what they might do without thinking (low discoverer). Ask them to choose boldness here, to choose to be discoverers.

Ask them to discuss in their small groups how strengths can be helpful and used to build value, but sometimes we can use them without thinking and they take us away from what we care about – e.g. honesty is good for relationships, but can also be the opposite because it can be brutal and can be hard for others to hear.

Each person should come up with 3 ways to share with the small group

1) How can you build this strength?
2) How can you build this strength in your group?
3) How can you build this strength in your lives with family, friends, or classrooms?

Try it, track it, build it

An important piece of the discoverer is teaching young people how to track the outcomes of their actions, as well as how to track the outcomes of new initiatives.

A fun way to introduce this is to return the exercises ‘pen says woo’ in the advisor module. Simply hold up the pen at an odd time, and when some of the group say ‘woo’, discuss how this is an advisor rule, and one part of the discoverer is to work out how useful our rules are in a situation. So how useful is this now?

Follow this with an open up a discussion, with a fun aspect too, of how we humans do the same thing over and over and expect something different to happen.

Example dialogue

Often, we humans just keep doing the same thing over and over expecting a different outcome. We do something, and then suddenly see how it is just more of the same? For example, I once found myself arguing with my son, each time we had a different opinion, he would start to get louder, and I would get louder, and it would go on and on. Until one day my other son said, “you two always do this, it never changes”. So I stopped and thought, ‘Hmm what is the thing I am doing? And what am I
getting?” I realised that we had this over and over way of arguing that never changed. So next time, I decided to do something different to see what would happen. This is an example of tracking.

Can you think of things you keep doing, over and over? Let the group share some examples and if you can, have a bit of fun with the idea that we humans are funny creatures. We get stuck easily. For example reacting to an annoying teacher in the same way; going into a class with the same negative attitude; responding in the same dismissive way when your mum asks how school is going, engaging in the same “judgey” conversations whenever you are with a certain group of girls.

Key points to include
- Discuss how some behaviours we engage in over and over can become a problem. Becoming more skilled as a discoverer is about seeing when we are stuck doing the same thing over and over – low discoverer is not trying.
- Ask the group, how they would know if a behaviour is helpful or not? Point them to the idea that our behaviour is messy and hard to always know what we want or don’t want. Tracking is a way to help us with that.
- We can begin this by following these 3 simple ideas when we feel stuck.

**Discoverers - try, track, & build:**

- **1. Try it** - Our thoughts or feelings (advisor and noticer) are not the same as trying out an experience.
- **2. Track it** - Our experience helps us decide if our behaviour is on the right track. Ask yourself, “What happened when I did that?”
- **3. Build it** - We use curiosity, exploration, and testing to build our strengths and create things we care about.

**Discoverer moves don’t always have to be big things. Can be simple like**

- Take a breath and don’t run away
- Learn how to take a breath before you have an argument with someone
- Pause before you post something on social media.

**DNA-v in action**

**The walk of life exercise (Hayes, L. L. & Ciarrochi, 2015)**

This is an opportunity to put DNA-v all together. It is easiest to read the “Walk of Life” script on the thrivingadolescent.com first ([http://thrivingadolescent.com/adolescent-resources/thriving-adolescent-book-downloads/](http://thrivingadolescent.com/adolescent-resources/thriving-adolescent-book-downloads/))

Suggest participants try and make some notes in their workbook as they do this activity

Adapted script for a group:
Facilitators, along with students, can choose a relevant scenario for the group and act out a ‘Walk of life’ exercise, having the students all role play parts of the model.

Ask for two volunteers to role play a “fictitious problem” (we’ll refer to them as the ‘student’ from now on). Choose a problem that is quite familiar to all – bullying, friends fighting.

Divide the remaining into four smaller groups (with at least 2 people in each group), they represent discoverer, noticer, advisor, and valuer. Now you have one or two students with a problem, and four groups representing D, N, A or V. Have these four groups sit together in a disc shape, like the DNA-V disk if you can.

Begin the role play:

To one or both of the ‘students’ who has the problem/struggle: “Imagine you are student struggling with a problem. What might that be?” Note, use a made up but common problem and have the two volunteers pretend they have ‘it’. This allows all of the young people to stand in their shoes. So there are two people in the role play, the “target person” who is trying new behaviors and the “Helper” who is setting up the social situation, e.g., by pretending to be a bully, a difficult friend, a teacher, a parent, etc. The two volunteers role play the situation, e.g., of the helper bullying the target person. Then, they stop in the middle of the role play, and the DNA-V groups are prompted to respond

To the V group: Let’s ask the V group what this student might care about? Allow the students to come up with ideas. Prompt if needed: - Perhaps they like to have friends, to play sport, to sing or dance. (Note watch for ideas that are clinging to states, “Want to be happy” or avoiding states, i.e. “Want not to be anxious”. If these clinging/avoiding states come up, ask the V group: ‘What might this student be able to do if they were happy that he/she is not doing now?’ or ‘What would he/she be able to do if you they were not worried about being anxious?’

Ask ‘students’ to step to the advisor group.

Now let’s ask the advisor group what the target person is likely to be experiencing. What kind of things would this student be saying about their self? Would they be blaming others or themselves? What beliefs, judgements, evaluations might they have? “Perhaps I’m an idiot. They are stupid. I got it wrong. They think I’m an idiot. I’m afraid.”

Have the ‘students’ say some of these things and then say, “You seem stuck in your advisor, one of the easiest things to do is to step into the noticer space. Let’s try that. It’s not the only thing we can do, but it is one thing.” Ask the student to step to the noticer group.

To the noticer group:

Ok, the students have stepped to noticing (ask the Noticer group to help her/him out). What might this target person notice inside them right now? Prompt for difficult feelings, nervousness, etc.
Now ask: “What have we learned that we can do in the noticer space? Prompt for – (1) take a breath or two, (2) notice what’s it like to be here instead of over there on advisor space, (3) notice what is around them. Then ask – “What other noticer skills could she/he use now?” (Prompt for naming, allowing, pausing, expanding awareness, being mindful of others feelings etc.).

Ask the ‘students’ if they are willing to practice some of these noticing skills while the group encourage.

Then ask: “What about the discoverers? They have nothing to do. Perhaps we can go over there too?”.

Have the ‘students’ move to there.

To the discoverer group:

Let’s ask the discoverer group to help us out. “What can a discoverer do here? Be curious. Try some experience they haven’t tried before? They could see what is working. What new things might you try?

Prompt for small things. Point out that just moving into noticer, or discoverer is doing something too.

Maybe ask what strengths this ‘student’ has?

(Note: watch out for big things which are a control agenda, e.g. “So I could tell myself I’m not really a loser”).

Finally, ask the student to step back to the advisor group and ask:

“What new thinking rules can this student’s advisor learn?”

Prompt for new rules that connect with vitality. For example, “It’s ok to be nervous” or “My advisor’s job is to look out for danger so it is often critical”.

Now redo the role play, this time with the target person trying some new response to the helper. You can repeat this process as many times as seems effective.

**Group discussion:**

Spend some time having the whole group talk about each role, what they became aware of, how it might be true or not true for them.

**Key message**

- The key with DNA-v is becoming a DNA-v shifter, whenever you are stuck you get to move to another skill.
Home task

- Ask students to spend some time this week practicing becoming aware of when they are stuck in noticer, advisor or discoverer
- Make a decision to move from one space to another.
- Ask them to notice what happens when they step into a different space.

Ending the session

- Check home practice is written in the workbook
- Check for questions or comments
- Thank everyone
- Consider collecting the workbooks up and bringing them next week
- Reminder that anyone who is worried or concerned can connect after the session.
Session 5 - Values

Equipment

- YouTube clip: Seconds - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdymCQ5PXrs
- Values cards—one set for each student (they do not keep them).
  - These can be downloaded free from – http://thrivingadolescent.com/2016/01/19/strength-spotting-card-sort-free-download/
  - Or purchased with all proceeds going to charity from http://thrivingadolescent.com/shop/ in Australia, or from here in the UK/Europe https://contextualconsulting.co.uk/act-values-conversation-cards
- Values handout at the end of this session. 1 per student
- Success scenarios handout

Aim of the session - Value as a process

The aim of this session is to create contexts with value present, and then to help young people connect this with action.

Value is the process of helping to create contexts that empower young people to clarify what brings them vitality or value and then to choose value consistent actions.

- Value is an augmented rule that is used to connect current behaviour with future hoped for outcomes
- It is constructed from language (we speak about it, and in doing so we created it)
- It is constructed about patterns of behaviour that are intrinsically reinforcing
- It is constantly changing and evolving

Recap and Reflection

- Recap and discuss what they remember about Noticer, Advisor and Discoverer.
- Remind them that they are all good and the key task is to learn to move.
- Check if anyone has an example of noticer, advisor or discoverer, or of moving from home practice.

Small things matter

Seconds - YouTube clock video

The purpose of this activity is to get everyone thinking about how small moments are the building blocks to what we love. How small things matter. We can create life in just small moments of time, it doesn’t have to be big grand plans, it can be smiling at a friend.

It doesn’t have to be goals that are world changing. Small actions have consequences.

Open a group discussion about the kind of small things that create wonderful moments. Point loosely to examples that the six ways of wellbeing. We cover the 6 ways in session 6 so no need to go over it, but do introduce variability in the discussion, for example a funny photo (noticing now) a
text from a friend (connecting), passing a test (challenging oneself), the delight of sleeping in (self-care), etc.

**Introduce Values**

Facilitators should introduce the concept of Values.

Sample dialogue

So far we have learned about D, N and A, and practiced how to move around. We’ve also talked a little bit about V, what you value, but today we are going to spend a bit of time working out what YOU value, what is in your heart, what you care about, or what makes your life meaningful.

We use the word values, and you can think of it a bit like a compass. You can learn about value to help keep you live well, keep you doing the things you love and getting unstuck when you are having a tough time. But just like a point on a compass you never reach value. Just as you can never stop and say “Here I am at West”. There is always West to head towards, in the same way you will never get to a point and say “I have done kindness, that is ticked off I don’t need to do that anymore”.

**Values card sort**

The purpose of this activity is to facilitate identification of a set of 3-4 personal values by each adolescent. It is explained in full in The Thriving Adolescent (Hayes, L. L. & Ciarrochi, 2015).

Instructions:

Hand a set of values card to each student. Ask the students to think about what is closest to their heart, what they love, what they care about. It doesn’t matter if it is something they don’t have much of, it can still be something they are about. Ask them to think about life right now, not in the future or the past.

Students should sort the cards into 3 piles, one pile that “doesn’t matter much right now”, one pile that “matters a fair bit right now”, and one pile that “matters most right now”.

Once they have done this, ask the students to spread out the “matters most” pile and select JUST 3 or 4 cards that are most important to them.

When the card sort is complete ask the students to:

- talk in a small group or pairs about why they chose that, and about commonalities
- find someone who has the same value
- hear what their advisor is saying as they try to answer questions
- notice what emotions arise as they talk about their value
- talk of what discoveries they have made about this value
**Values handout activity**

Using the values handout, ask students to write their 3-4 chosen values in the circles.

Ask students to choose an action to engage more with one of their values. Goals need to be small and measurable, avoid goals that are unrealistic (for example; I’m going to be nice to everyone all week). Ask them to students to write their goal in the square boxes.

Ask whether a few students are prepared to share a values and goal to facilitate a discussion and check for any unrealistic or unmeasurable goals.

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**Strengths for value is Success**

The purpose of this activity is to introduce the concepts of using your strengths to connect with what you care about. Discuss how success in DNA-v is using D, N and A in ways that help one become more flexible, get unstuck quicker, and tune in to the process of trying rather than the outcome as a measure of success. Strengths for success handout can be used.

Instructions
Break into small groups and use the success scenarios to generate small group discussions about success. Feedback.

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**Home task**

- Make a move toward a value by completing their goal.
- Ask students to notice what their mind is telling them about success over the next week.

**Ending the session**

- Check home practice is written in the workbook
- Check for questions or comments
- Thank everyone
- Consider collecting the workbooks up and bringing them next week
- Reminder that anyone who is worried or concerned can connect after the session.
Success Scenarios (Ciarrochi, Hayes, L. L. & Bailey, 2012)

Promoting Fairness

You value Promoting Fairness. There is a boy at school who seems really unhappy and doesn’t have many friends. You see him getting picked on at lunchtime by two other kids. You go over to help him and ask him what is going on. He is really mean to you and tells you he can look after himself and you should just mind your own business. He walks off and the other 2 kids laugh at you.

Did you succeed?

Working Cooperatively

You value Working Cooperatively. You have a group project to do for school. You did your best on the project and tried to include all of your group. You helped the group share out the work evenly and make sure everyone had an equal about of work to do. You organised a few group meetings to work together but some people didn’t turn up. You finished your part of it on time. You helped another person from your group who was stuck. In the end it didn’t work out well because some people didn’t do their sections. Your group didn’t get a very good mark for the project. You find out the best mark went to a group where one person did the whole project herself because she said her group was useless and their work wouldn’t have been any good.

Did you succeed?

Being kind

You value Kindness. You are kind and make friends with a girl in your class who is new to your school. You introduce her to your friends and she starts hanging out with you. You talk and laugh a lot, listen to each other, watch out for each other. She gets a boyfriend and starts hangs out with him all the time. She stops hanging out with you. You hardly hear from her anymore.

Did you succeed?
Having courage

You value Courage. There is a new girl at school this year and you really like her. She is so gorgeous and seems really friendly. She smiles and laughs all the time, she is making friends at your school really quickly. You want to ask her out but you are so nervous it is hard to even say hello. You suck up all your courage and ask her if she wants to walk to the café after school. She says she can’t because she has basketball practice. She walks away and you feel really confused and embarrassed.

Did you succeed?

Being supportive

You value Being Supportive. You used to play football for the school team but you get sick half way through the season and couldn’t play. You are really disappointed because you love playing football and all your friends play on the team. The team does really well and gets to the finals and you still aren’t able to play. You are invited to the movies on the day of the final but you go to the game to support your team and watch your friends play football. They play really badly and lose. It’s a terrible day.

Did you succeed?

Persisting

You value persisting. You really want to play soccer for your school team. You go to training all preseason and listen to the coach. You do exactly what is asked of you, train really hard and play really well in the tryouts. You don’t get selected on the team. The coach says you were very close, and you should keep practising and try out again next time. You are really disappointed.

Did you succeed?
Session 6 – Self-view and the Six ways of wellbeing

Equipment

- YouTube clip - ‘We are all scared’ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmAekTPD5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmAekTPD5c)
- DNA-v disc from workbook
- Poster paper – black is cool but white is ok too
- Graffiti pens or markers

Aim of the session - Self-view as a perspective of all our D, N, A and V

Self is not a thing, but a way of seeing how we create our self through our changing D, N, A and V.

This session covers self in a light way, given that we are referring to school groups. If you are doing therapy groups, you may need to consider adding in a whole session on self, perspective taking and compassion.

Read the chapters on the self in action in The Thriving Adolescent for a complex account of the self and development.

Recap and Reflection

- Advisor is how we have learned to talk to ourselves, and how we use this to predict and problem solve
- Discoverer is what we do – try, track and build
- Noticer is what we can be aware of inside us, outside us, and sensing safety or danger.
- Check if anyone has examples from last session home task

Who are You?

Begin with a discussion on the self, just allow the group to talk generally opening up self as a concept:

- What is a ‘self’?
- How we become a ‘self’?
- Does our self stay the same or change?

Drawing your DNA-v

Using the DNA-v disc handout in their workbook, ask the students to draw ‘icons’ that represent each process as unique to them. Be sure to ask them to do positive and negative aspects in each. For example, in advisor one might draw a head icon yelling to represent critical self-talk, and one also
might draw a head icon thinking to represent positive reflection. An example is shown below and can be shown to students.

Instructions

Ask the student to talk about which parts of the disc are ‘them’.

Ask them to discuss what happens when they can see nothing but one thing (you can have them block part of the drawing), such as their critical advice, what happens to the other parts of the disc? Answer – they are always there.

The whole disc and all parts of us are always present.

Ask them to notice that ALL of the disc is them.

Ask them to notice how the things they put in the circle could change a lot from when they were 12 to 16 to 22 years.
Making our self

Show the ‘We are all scared’ YouTube clip - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmAekTPD5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmAekTPD5c)

Discuss how Hank in the video is also talking about how we make our self by what we do. Talk about this in a liberating way – we can always add things.

The self isn’t really a thing, and the process of creating our self happens every day – small things matter.
6 ways to wellbeing

A fun and silly intro

Introduce the group to the ideas that:

- We can use six ways to help ourselves enact value
- That as we use them, we are changing how we see our ‘self’
- Small things matter for building a life we care about

Connecting with others. Humans are essentially social. Remove us from our social group, and we are likely to develop poor mental health, get sick, and die (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Sarason & Sarason, 1985). Take a moment now to answer this question: What is most important in your life? Does your answer involve other people?

Giving to others and having a positive influence. Giving is a pattern of activity that’s likely to be forced upon young people. Even so, research suggests that giving may be intrinsically reinforcing (Rilling et al., 2007), so if we can find ways to help young people experience giving, they’ll be likely to discover their own authentic reasons for giving. There is no need to force-feed them this value.

Being active. Physical activity is associated with greater well-being and lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups (Biddle & Ekkekakis, 2005). Recent research also suggests that activity may improve intellectual performance (Singh, Uijtdewilligen, Twisk, van Mechelen, & Chinapaw, 2012). In addition, physical activity can also support other values, such as connecting with others and embracing the moment (Ciarrochi et al., 2014).

Embracing the moment. This broad category involves fully partaking of what-ever is immediately in front of us, rather than being focused on the future or the past. This value spans many realms, from exploring and traveling to playing music and enjoying food. For this reason, it’s likely to overlap with many if not all of the other categories of values.

Challenging ourselves and learning. It’s a myth that people are happiest when they have no work and can live a challenge-free life. In fact, evidence suggests that unemployment is one of the strongest predictors of poor well-being (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Researchers have found that when people are immersed in a challenge, they tend to experience increased subjective well-being (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003).

Caring for ourselves. This category refers to a broad range of self-care behaviors, such as maintaining a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, and doing something relaxing after a hard day.
Introduce the Spinning wheel, or simply write the 6 ways to wellbeing on 6 pieces of paper and have them drawn out of a hat.

Ask the group if they would be willing to do one of the activities now.

Instructions
Spin the wheel or draw a name an activity from the hat. Invite the group to do one of the ways now, in any way they want. (We have seen young people do some great things with this activity, so do let them find a way. Some examples we have seen, giving – they might give a hug or a smile, challenging – they might teach the group to say hello in another language, or learn a song).

Social DNA-v

Using 6 ways to wellbeing for us as a group

Instructions
Split into 6 groups and have each group represent one of the ways of wellbeing.
Give each group larger banners and graffiti pens.
Ask each group to brainstorm what behaviours they might do to build this wellbeing activity.
Ask them to draw or decorate their banner so it represents what giving means to them here at school.
Make this into a poster that shows what each way can mean for them as students.
Decorate this giving page to show what acting in this way means.

Watch for pliance, i.e. writing what they think they are supposed to write. You may like to call it out first, i.e. ‘we don’t mean ‘students must follow school rules’. We mean, what matters to you in how you want to see your fellow students ‘Giving’.
Avoid too many words as it can become rule governed.
Debrief what they noticed in the graffiti exercise.
Then give the group leadership and build discovery strengths by asking them how they as a group would like to move forward with their shared ‘six ways’.
Discuss how D, N, A and V are in all of us, and how we are reciprocally influencing each other.
If appropriate discuss how they might set agreed tasks. For example, one group of student made videos of them building D, N, A and V in their school.

**Closure**

Ask the group to create ways to say goodbye and end the group. Some ideas - photographing all the students with their posters from the activity above. Writing a shared DNA-v creed.

**Ending the session**

- Check for questions or comments
- Handout evaluations
- Thank everyone
- Reminder that anyone who is worried or concerned can connect after the session.
References


