

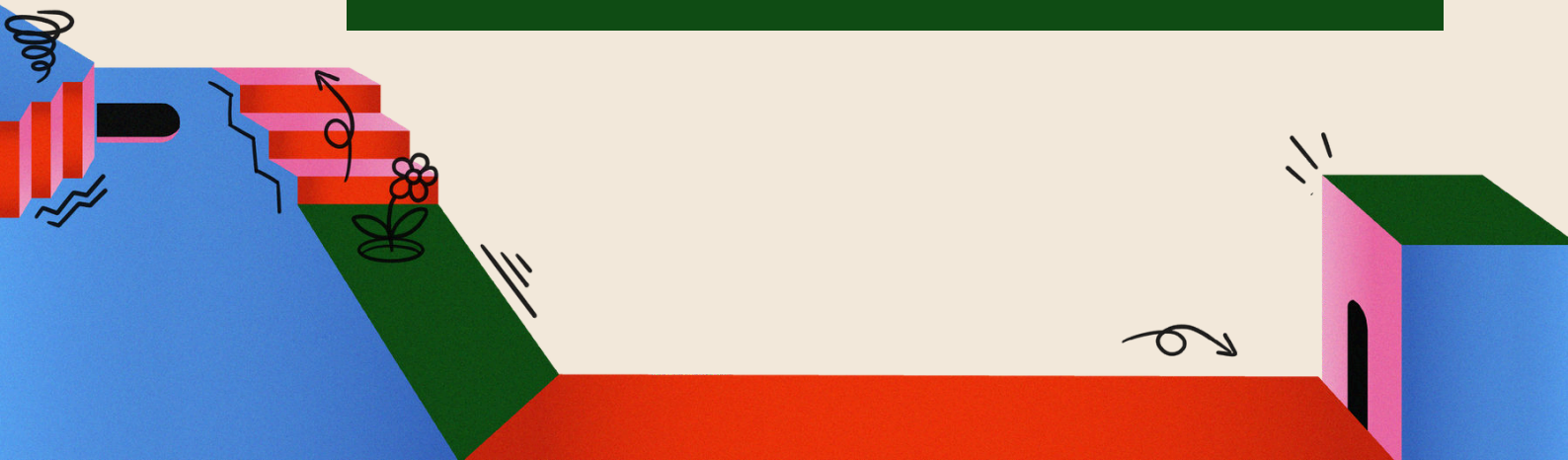


Introduction to

Advantaged Thinking

for Young People

A reflective workbook covering the principles of Advantaged Thinking for young people living in Youth Foyers

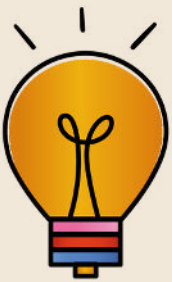


WELCOME!

This workbook will give you an introduction to what **Advantaged Thinking** is.

In particular, it will guide you to learn about:

- What Advantaged Thinking means (p.3).
- The characteristics of an Advantaged Thinker (p.10).
- How Advantaged Thinking applies to your Youth Foyer (p.16).
- The 7 Tests of Advantaged Thinking (p.18).



There are lots of **reflective activities** throughout this workbook, which you can complete on your own, or with someone else guiding you through it in a one-to-one or group setting.

You can either print off the '**Space to Reflect**' pages to fill in the blank spaces, or keep your own notes on paper, in a journal, in a notes app, or by typing directly into the PDF.



Advantaged Thinking

WHAT ADVANTAGED THINKING MEANS

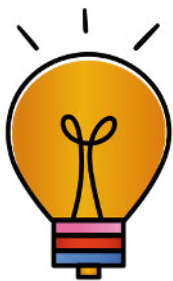
If we focus on the things people are able to do – on their strengths and aspirations, rather than their problems or circumstances – we enable people to grow and flourish. Advantaged Thinking understands that working towards people’s aspirations and dreams is just as important as meeting their immediate needs.

Advantaged Thinking is about our passion for the possible!



Advantaged Thinkers believe that anyone can achieve success when they have the right support, opportunities and belief in place to do so.

Success will mean different things for different people at different stages of their life – but whatever the context, an Advantaged Thinking approach will always help.

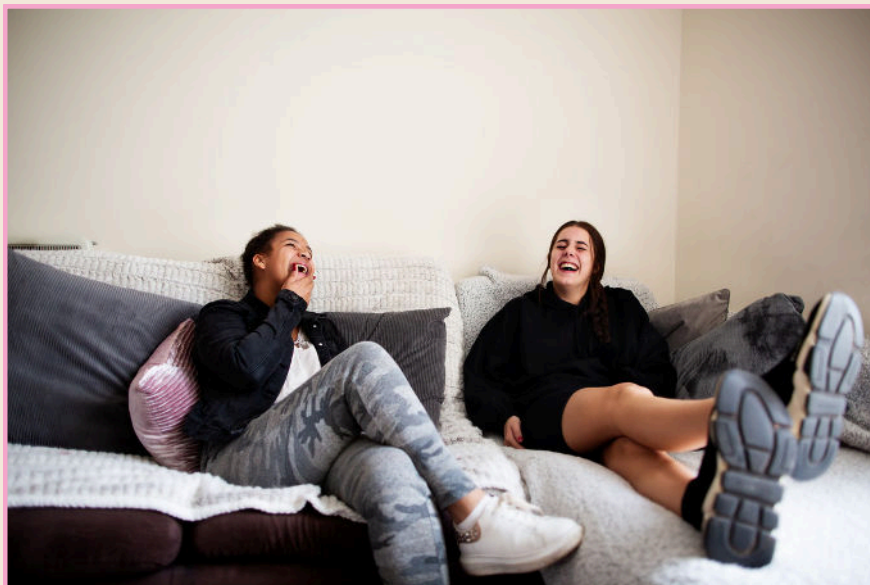


What does success mean for you right now?

The Foyer Federation developed Advantaged Thinking to challenge and take action against the widespread deficit-based (don't worry we'll explain what that means next!) culture and services delivered for young people.



It's an approach that helps services to be **positive, nurturing spaces**. With staff who work with you in an engaging, personalised way. It asks you to reflect on your strengths and use them to shape your future.



Advantaged Thinking moves the dial from 'how do we help people survive and cope with problems' to 'how can we equip people to thrive?'

Surviving

Coping

Adapting

Thriving



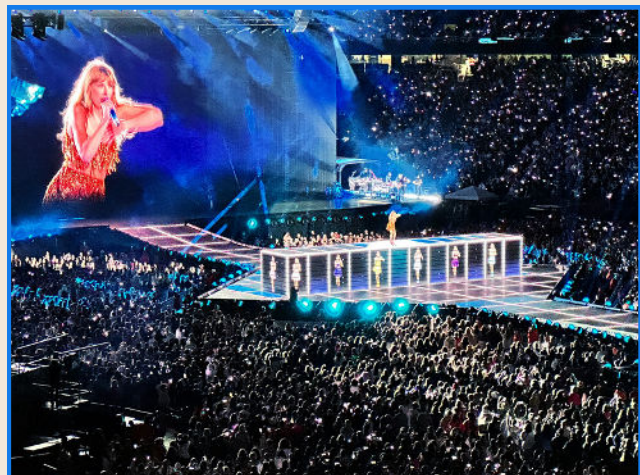
Taylor Swift's song 'Shake it off' is all about not letting the negatives stop you:

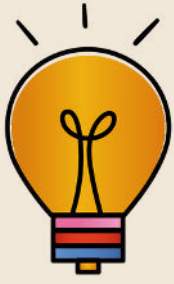
**I stay out too late
Got nothing in my brain
That's what people say, mm-mm
That's what people say, mm-mm
I go on too many dates
But I can't make 'em stay
At least that's what people say, mm-mm
That's what people say, mm-mm
But I keep cruisin'
Can't stop, won't stop movin'
It's like I got this music in my mind
Sayin' it's gonna be alright'
'Cause the players gonna play, play, play, play, play
And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off, I shake it off (hoo-hoo-hoo)
Heartbreakers gonna break, break, break, break, break
And the fakers gonna fake, fake, fake, fake, fake
Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake
I shake it off, I shake it off (hoo-hoo-hoo)**

Listen to the full song on YouTube by scanning the QR code below:



Photo by Stephen Mease on Unsplash





What songs would you put on an Advantaged Thinking playlist?

They should be songs that express a passion for the possible; a positive view; positive action; inspiration; overcoming challenges to achieve success; investing in people's potential.

You might want to create this as a real playlist on a music app, and maybe even share it with other people in your Youth Foyer to add their own Advantaged Thinking songs!

The opposite to Advantaged Thinking is...

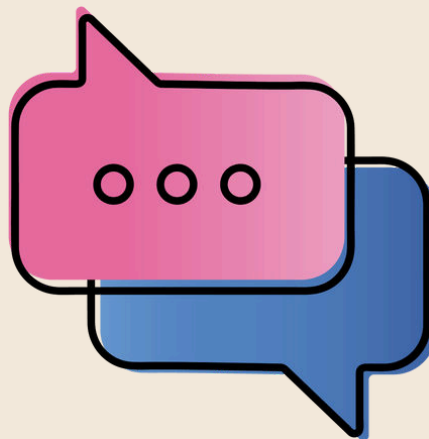
Disadvantaged Thinking

Disadvantaged Thinkers assume that some people do not have talent or potential. They define people by problems and deficits (what they might lack), and build services based on this limited view of people's future.

Disadvantaged Thinking will only help people survive and cope because of its central belief that people can't do anything more. It works to limit risks and prevent harm, but by doing so does not look for any positive breakthroughs. It does not try to find solutions that can last longer term.

Disadvantaged Thinking invests wastefully because it will never find a way to use people's full talents.

Who would want to be worked with in a Disadvantaged Thinking way?



SPACE TO REFLECT



Take time to reflect by yourself, with a friend, or a coach.

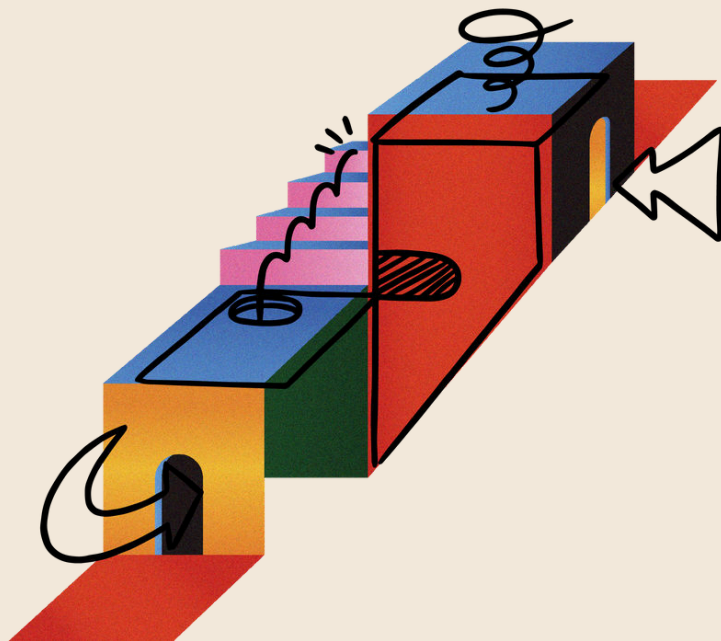
Can you think of a time when you have been able to achieve something? Perhaps in your relationships, as part of a sports team or through a creative activity... What support, opportunities or resources did you need to help you get there? How far did you need to believe in yourself?

Has there been a time when disadvantage crept into your thinking? When you focused only on risk, harm or challenge, rather than also thinking of strengths, positives and potential?

We all have the potential to create success within our lives and to achieve goals which matter to us. We will all need support and resources to get there, building our strengths and talents. We might also have the opportunity to be this support for others.

It is inevitable that Disadvantaged Thinking has at times crept into our lives. We're human after all! Sometimes when things are tough we will need to focus on the challenges, problems or risks.

Advantaged Thinking is not something you complete, but something we are always working towards. Throughout this course we will look at how we can challenge ourselves to adopt an Advantaged Thinking approach in ways that can support us to thrive.



CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVANTAGED THINKERS

Now that we have briefly explained what Advantaged Thinking means, we can begin to explore how to put the theory into practice as an official Advantaged Thinker.

In the spirit of Advantaged Thinking, where better to start than with your strengths!

Here's an exercise to help you reflect on your AT starting point. Look at the four characteristics of what it means to be an Advantaged Thinker...



Creative Thinker

Are you a **creative thinker**? You try to find solutions outside of the norm and problem solve in creative ways. When you meet an obstacle you are willing to 'think outside of the box' to decide next steps.

Do you **spot and develop talents**? You're able to see strengths in yourself and others. You enjoy nurturing and supporting other people's talents, as well as developing your own.



Spots & develops talents



Brave & challenges negativity

Do you **challenge negativity**? You are willing to be brave and advocate for yourself and others. You are prepared to challenge negativity in yourself and others, even if it's not the majority opinion in the room.

Are you **reflective, compassionate and empathetic**? You take time to empathise with others, seeing the world from their point of view, trying to understand their perspective. You have concern for others' wellbeing and take time to think how you can support those around you.

**Reflective,
compassionate
& empathetic**



Out of the 4 characteristics, in which area do you feel most strong? You might feel that more than one of these describes you, but please choose the one that stands out most to you.



Creative Thinker



Spots & develops talents



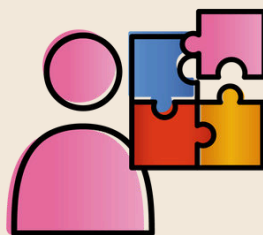
Brave & challenges negativity



Reflective, compassionate & empathetic

In order to be an effective Advantaged Thinker we will need to use all of the characteristics.

It is likely that one or two might sit more naturally with us, meaning we will need to work a bit harder at the others. Also circumstances may require us to focus on one of the characteristics more.



SPACE TO REFLECT



Take time to reflect by yourself, with a friend, or a coach.

Reflecting on each of the Advantaged Thinking characteristics, please note down when you have used or demonstrated it in your own life:

When have you been a **creative thinker**?

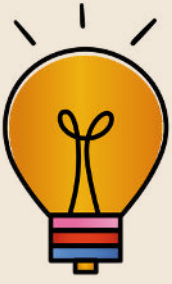
When have you **spotted talents** in yourself or others?

When have you **challenged negativity**?

When have you been **reflective, compassionate & empathetic**?

Is there one of the characteristics which you had fewer examples for? Perhaps this is an area to grow for you. What actions would you like to take to grow this characteristic in yourself?

Sometimes it can be hard to stop and reflect on what we are good at. It's easy to focus *only* on where we want to be better. Having a record of these positive reflections and areas for development might be really helpful.



Using the definition of Advantaged Thinking and the characteristics of an Advantaged Thinker, can you think of a person (real, historical or fictional!) who embodies this approach?

Perhaps they are someone who sees a glass as 'half full' rather than 'half empty'. Perhaps, they are good at approaching any weaknesses through a positive focus on goals and strengths.

In what ways do they embody Advantaged Thinking?

What about Luke Skywalker in the film Star Wars taking positive action to join Obi-Wan Kenobi to fight against the Empire? He refused to let problems get in the way of possible actions – he didn't give up easily when faced with obstacles, staying determined.

What about Katniss Everdeen from The Hunger Games Trilogy or Matilda from the book, film or musical of the same name? They both used their strengths to overcome great odds even when others didn't always believe in them.

Before we move on to the next section, it's worth pointing out that Advantaged thinking is different to...

Toxic Positivity

'Toxic positivity is the belief that people should maintain a positive mindset no matter how dire or difficult a situation is... toxic positivity rejects all difficult emotions in favour of a cheerful and often falsely positive façade.'

Kendra Cherry, 2024, [verywell](#)

We will all have painful emotions and experiences in our lives. These feelings are valid, and though unpleasant they should be dealt with openly. We need to feel our feelings and not bottle up or ignore the tough ones.

Advantaged Thinking should not be toxic. Instead it is about having a belief in people's potential to meet the goals and aspirations that matter to them. We should try and understand people based on their talents and passions, not only their current or past challenges. It is not about ignoring or not listening to people when things aren't going as well.

In Advantaged Thinking the characteristic of being reflective, compassionate and empathetic is key. This means having empathy for others' situations, being there for them when they need us.

HOW ADVANTAGED THINKING APPLIES TO YOUR YOUTH FOYER

I'm sure you'd agree it's important for those around us to care about our strengths, talents and aspirations for the future. We all need people who believe in us and are proud when we are successful.

By being a member of The Foyer Federation network your Youth Foyer has agreed to work in an Advantaged Thinking way. This means a focus on supporting you to thrive, not merely cope, should be a key part of the Youth Foyer offer.



Can you think of a time that an adult or professional was **disadvantaged in their thinking or approach to you or your situation?**

How did this make you feel?

(Choose as many options as you like)

Happy Hopeful Excited Frustrated Angry Upset Tired
Positive Negative Neutral Unsurprised Surprised Other

Can you think of a time that an adult or professional was **advantaged in their thinking or approach to you or your situation?**

How did that make you feel?

(Choose as many options as you like)



Happy Hopeful Excited Frustrated Angry Upset Tired
Positive Negative Neutral Unsurprised Surprised Other

All members of the Foyer Federation sign up to the **Advantaged Thinking Charter**. This sets out the Advantaged Thinking behaviours expected in Youth Foyer services:

Our Advantaged Thinking Charter

This is an Advantaged Thinking Foyer. We pledge to work in an Advantaged Thinking way. We will:

- 1 TALK:** we use positive language
- 2 UNDERSTAND:** we focus on abilities
- 3 WORK:** we develop opportunities
- 4 INVEST:** we aim for thriving livelihoods
- 5 BELIEVE:** we dream big
- 6 INVOLVE:** we work with you
- 7 CHALLENGE:** we influence others to be better

We commit to continually holding ourselves to the ideas and practices of Advantaged Thinking every day.



THE 7 TESTS OF ADVANTAGED THINKING

We use the **7 Tests of Advantaged Thinking** to reflect on how staff and services can be Advantaged Thinkers in their everyday work with you and other young people.

They are ‘tests’ because there is ongoing work to do. They’re not something you simply pass or fail: they exist to offer constant guidance to challenge services to push further and try harder.

Please watch this brief animation to introduce the 7 tests.

Either click or tap on the thumbnail image below or scan the QR code:



**Are you an
Advantaged
Thinker?**



Over the next four pages we’ve described those 7 Tests in more detail. Under each test, make some brief notes about where you think your Youth Foyer does this (or where they could do more if you have some good suggestions).

Test One: Talk

Do you always try to use positive language to talk about and describe people, instead of negatives and stereotypes?



Youth Foyers should use positive language about the young people who use their service, not stereotypes or negative labels. This test promotes talking about people in ways that respect their individual humanity and potential. This should be reflected on Youth Foyer paperwork, posters and signs around the building, as well as on their online profiles. This goes for images and pictures too, not just words.

Test 2: Understand

Do you always try to learn about someone's strengths and potential above their weaknesses and limits?



Youth Foyers should use tools, resources and methods to better understand people's strengths, not only their challenges and weaknesses. This should be at the initial interview stage, in your 1-2-1 meeting with your key worker, as well as tracking positive progress made over time. Youth Foyers might also encourage people to take ownership of and share their story in positive ways which feel empowering.

Test 3: Work with

When you work with others, do you try to focus on developing solutions and assets instead of just supporting problems and deficits?



Staff and services should work with the strengths of others, enabling experts to emerge. They should form good partnerships to complement their skills and experience, creating more opportunities for young people. They should 'work with' rather than 'doing to'. It's all about being person centred in their work, helping people to develop their strengths and ambitions.

Test 4: Invest

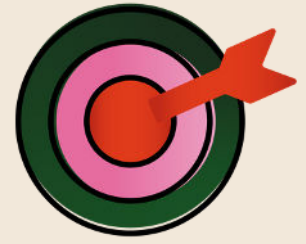
Do you allocate your resources on enabling people to thrive, instead of just supporting them to cope?



Youth Foyers should invest in people so they can progress through periods of surviving and coping towards thriving lives. Investing can refer to financial, human, physical, programme and partner resources. This might mean having learning programmes and events which focus on developing skills for your future, not only immediate needs in the present.

Test 5: Believe

Do you always hold out an aspiration for someone's future that is the same you would have for yourself and your family?



Staff should have an unconditional regard for who people are, a strong belief in what people can achieve with the right opportunities and support, and the determination to trust in people's potential.

Test 6: Involve

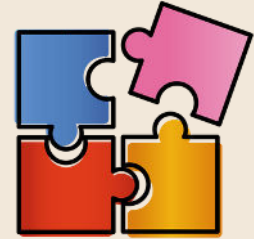
Do you always involve the person you are working with to use their experiences to develop their own solutions?



Youth Foyers should harness individual experiences and insights to shape approaches and solutions. They should really listen to young people, demonstrating solidarity and ensuring authenticity and accountability. Staff should support young people to build autonomy and ownership. Young people should have power to make decisions on the things that affect their lives and feel truly listened to.

Test 7: Challenge

Do you always listen out for and respond to the Advantaged and Disadvantaged Thinking of others?



The Challenge test brings together all the tests of Advantaged Thinking. It's about campaigning and influencing others to adopt the approach, as well as the ongoing professional and personal development of staff. Does your Youth Foyer celebrate young people's success? Do they stand up for those they work with in the wider community, sometimes being brave to challenge others?



An example of Advantaged Thinking in action

The **Youth Power Fund project** funded Youth Foyers to develop youth leadership opportunities within their service. Where young people could lead in decision making and were truly listened to.

Watch [this video](#) to learn more:



SPACE TO REFLECT



Take time to reflect by yourself, with a friend, or a coach.

Look back at your notes under each test. Choose one or more examples of where your Youth Foyer embodies one (or more) of the tests of Advantaged Thinking. Write about them here.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for working through the Introduction to Advantaged Thinking for Young People. We hope you've enjoyed it!

In this workbook, you have learned about:

- What Advantaged Thinking means
- Characteristics of an Advantaged Thinker
- How Advantaged Thinking applies to your Youth Foyer
- The 7 tests of Advantaged Thinking

Advantaged Thinking is all about taking a positive view through positive action. Understanding ability, recognising qualities, promoting achievements, inspiring what is possible. Using the advantages we possess as humans to create and do new things.

In Advantaged Thinking, our needs, deficits and weaknesses are given a different focus by being connected to our goals, assets and strengths. Advantaged Thinking believes that taking positive action allows us to deal more effectively with the negatives in our lives.

NEXT STEPS

We hope we have inspired you to explore more about Advantaged Thinking. For a host of resources and information please visit advantagedthinking.co.uk

In order to record your learning please take some time to fill out 'My Advantaged Thinking Profile' on the next pages.

MY ADVANTAGED THINKING PROFILE



Reflect on your learning by answering the questions below:

I am an Advantaged Thinker because...

The Advantaged Thinking skills or characteristics I am most proud of in myself are...

The Advantaged Thinking skills or characteristics I would like to develop further are...

Find out more and join the
Advantaged Thinking movement at
advantagedthinking.co.uk

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