**Gloria Schultz:** You are listening to the PYD Lab. (Music plays)

The podcast for implementers and young leaders who want to examine innovative approaches to Positive Youth Development and hear stories of young people leading change in their communities.

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**Natasha Zena:** Hey. It's Natasha and you're in the PYD Lab, and today we're with Katie Green.

Welcome Katie!

**Katie Green:** Thanks! I’m excited to be here.

**Natasha Zena:** Now Katie has spent the last 20 plus years learning from young leaders and their supporters in many countries.

Today she's an independent consultant who develops training, curricula, and conducts assessments on a variety of positive youth development topics.

Now you're one of the authors of the Youth Center Toolkit, which is focused on creating resources for safe spaces, youth centers, and after-school programs. This toolkit officially became available in late 2020 at [youthpower.org](https://youthpower.org).

Who is the Youth Center Toolkit for and how can they best use it?

**Katie Green:** The Youth Center Toolkit was really designed to be kind of pulling together some of the lessons learned and good practices from different programs around the world with the hope that either youth practitioners, youth-led organizations, community leaders, and even donors can take the work that they're already doing, or they intend to do in creating safe spaces for young people and infuse as many elements of quality and impact as possible.

**Natasha Zena:** One of the cool things in the toolkit is that it delves a little deeper into the theory of change.

What is the theory of change and how does it apply to program objectives?

**Katie Green:** I find that that is one of the best conversation starters when I’m working with folks in or have worked with folks in various countries.

People are often creating safe spaces or creating a place for young people to come and be with other young people and be with programs.

I-I think is one of the most obvious things in the world, right? That it's a good thing to do -people- it's happening pretty much everywhere I’ve ever been.

But that question of what is it that you are doing? If you do this, then what do you hope happens as a result? Right?

So, what are the changes that you hope to see and young people that come to this place or come to the center, come to this program?

What are the skills that you're hoping they develop?

What are the changes in their perception of themselves?

Improving their own community?

So that simple question of if we do this, then this will happen: To me is kind of one of the most powerful questions in in that step from turning activities with young people into youth development activities.

**Natasha Zena:** When I was reading it, I thought: oh wow, you know what? It really helps you work with intention.

**Katie Green:** Yes.

**Natasha Zena:** You know?

**Katie Green:**  That’s exactly- yeah!

That is kind of the key ingredient, right?

To- taking what we're doing and making it intentional and developmental.

**Natasha Zena:** You've been doing work in Positive Youth Development*,* and the toolkit incorporates it as an approach.

Why is PYD crucial and how does it factor into program outcomes?

**Katie Green:** You know it's funny we talk about PYD, and it's developed and changed a lot in recent years.

I think again it's another one of those things that intuitively people get it but until you state it intentionally, you find out how often people aren't necessarily doing it.

So, for me I’ve always summed it up in one phrase that, we're asked coming in and asking whoever's involved young people, adults, communities’ leaders, to view young people as an asset to be developed rather than a problem to be solved.

Right?

That mantra which I- is not mine. I didn't invent that but to me that has always been the North Star of the value added of the PYD approach.

To me that inherently changes the nature of the activities, it changes the outcomes. In my experience it certainly changes whether young people are drawn to it or not. Whether they're interested.

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah, and to me it also seems to keep the young people engaged along all the stages. So, it's kind of also helping them essentially help themselves which is nice.

**Katie Green:** Yeah. Yeah.

That element of contribution is, it's both fundamental to the outcomes but also the process, right?

The young person is as a result of participating in this program, I recognize that I have something to contribute. Certainly, changes I think how communities view young people as an asset rather than a problem.

I’m still always amazed at how frequently when you do talk to leaders or kind of non-youth development practitioners, how eager people are to talk about young people as in terms of the problems and challenges that they face, right?

**Natasha Zena:** Right.

**Katie Green:** Which you know, those are real.

They're very, very real but I think when we build their programs around that view of young people as possessing assets kind of internally and around them it's-it's a different program.

**Natasha Zena:** One of the nice things about the toolkit, you know, is that it helps those who may be implementing something from scratch versus those who already have programs in motion and maybe you know want to improve them.

And the toolkit has a really thoughtful tool called the *Safe Spaces Checklist.*

Now while it does touch on you know the actual physical space and location elements, a lot of it which I thought was interesting involved a lot of staff-related items like you know relationship modeling, expectations, psychological safety.

Can you talk a little bit about why these items and elements are essential?

**Katie Green:** Yes, you honed right in on one of my favorite parts too. In my view that … the-the two things that are often not the focus that they should be is:

One, the toolkit makes the comment upfront. This is more about the software than the hardware so having high quality programs matters a lot more than your physical space.

But then two, the other kind of big thing is that development and support and emphasis on ensuring that staff know what their role is and how to be with young people in a way that is developmental and empowering.

So, to me that safe spaces checklist kind of frames it in terms of what does it look like when staff know how to act and be in a way that promotes that physical and psychological safety, clear consistent rules and expectations.

The understanding that part of the role is to be trustworthy and reliable.

It's to me, it's just so concrete because that's tomorrow one of those common phrases that's where the rubber hits the road right?

**Natasha Zena:** Right.

**Katie Green:** And-and of course when we're talking about staff it often can be paid staff.

It can be volunteers.

It can be adults in the community who are coming in.

But to have those kinds of expectations for how we are in this space, to me gives people such a more visible and concrete idea of what makes this place different than another activity that a young person could choose to spend their time at.

**Natasha Zena:** One of the things I also saw too when I was looking at the checklist and how you just talked a little bit about you know staff behavior and stuff like that.

I used to volunteer in a mentoring program for high school students for many years and during those mentoring training sessions it was just reiterated so many times the word consistency, right?

That a lot of the youth in the program didn't have a lot of consistency at home. And so, the importance of creating that in the space for the student, so sometimes you'd meet these students, and you know they'd be so closed off to you, you know in the beginning.

And when they see that you keep returning to you know day after day, then they did begin to open up and kind of rely and look forward to you being in that space and building trust like you said.

**Katie Green:** My first experience before I was a Peace Corps Volunteer, I worked in a uh a locked residential treatment facility for adolescents who you know came with a variety of challenges and difficult backgrounds and that predictability was one of the things that they emphasized to us.

And as a staff person realizing that you really, those are skills that you really can develop.

So until you get the opportunity to practice those, ideally go through training where you really again get to see what it's articulated what it looks like, how it changes the interaction. I-I think it's so critical.

And so often we're just grateful that people are engaged. You know, this is kind of the professionalization of youth workers that I think is something that I’m interested in kind of - I’ve been very happy to see in the last few years there's kind of growing programs around that.

**Natasha Zena:** How do we make safe spaces more inclusive?

I mean, I know that let's say for implementers you know what are some of the things that they should be thinking about?

Particularly those who already have safe spaces because sometimes implementing change can be tougher than you know starting from scratch.

And so, what are some things that they should be thinking about in terms of inclusivity?

**Katie Green:** A couple of the youth assessments I’ve done when we've done focus groups with young people who either some cases have physical disabilities or are marginalized in other ways from kind of the larger population.

I’ve heard a lot of things about accessibility and of course that can mean so many different things in the program.

And it's, you know we have a few resources in the toolkit that you can kind of do deeper dives into different areas.

So, again if you're looking at the barriers to accessibility whether they're physical, whether they're gender-based, whether they are location-wise and then certainly over the last year with COVID I think technology has upended a lot of our expectations and also possibilities.

Like it's as difficult and terrible in so many ways this last year has been that it has changed how we can think about accessibility to some resources and programs and opportunities for young people.

**Natasha Zena:** I think a lot of times when we talk safe spaces we're thinking of centers and-and these after school programs but sometimes it could be something as simple as her teacher's office.

Especially now you touched on the COVID-19 pandemic, and so some of these youth may not have access to their safe space, you know, during this time.

Are there innovative ways that implementers can help youth from afar? Whether that's utilizing technology, apps that kind of thing?

**Katie Green:** In so many ways it was pulling the rug out from so much of the work that center-based program or safe space program has been building but of course it's impossible not to talk about utilizing technology effectively.

Um in the toolkit they highlight some amazing young leadership from the Philippines and a young man used social media, WhatsApp, places where young people already were connecting to mobilize resources, to build connections, to um you know check in on peers and friends.

And those are critical, but of course, you know, we all think and know of so many young people that don't have access to those technology-based resources.

And I do think that that is going to keep being an issue as the, as the pandemic continues to change and evolve.

One of the other resources that came up as UNICEF was developing uh tools that young people could do at home kind of solitary but still do reflection, do activities, do strength-based work, that doesn't necessarily require, you know, being with other people or in in a center.

Which I think goes back to that, you know, for some people and some young people I think sometimes technology or being not with other people can be a place where you can grow and reflect as well.

That-that doesn't have to be in the center, right?

So the example you gave: a teacher's office it was kind of really one-on-one maybe those are the areas that we need to kind of keep considering.

Like, how do people thrive young people thrive individually and as part of a group?

When you're thinking about inclusivity you really want to think like look across all of the ways in which you want to be inclusive right?

Whether there's any fees for the programs.

Whether there's groups that you're concerned that aren't in the room and doing kind of that thoughtful intentional assessment that goes and talks to the people you want to make sure do have access to the program.

I think it's a tough one though.

We could talk about it for-for so long but it's so apparent when programs do a good job of that—that it's what a difference it makes, right?

**Natasha Zena:** Right. And I think you just touched on something interesting which I haven't thought of, you know.

When you just touched on fee-based programs.

I didn't think about that!

That youth may not be able to afford to attend and not every program is government-related.

**Katie Green:** Right. And as, you know in the toolkit looking for as programs span their sustainability or look at different funding models, that certainly, you know, if they want to spread out their revenue streams, careful, thoughtful, intentional assessments are always the key to everything, right?

**Natasha Zena:** Before we hop into your PYD recommendations for this episode, is there anything else you want to add on the youth center toolkit that maybe I failed to bring up?

**Katie Green:** It's not necessarily something you need to read from beginning to end, particularly all the links to good programs and resources at the end.

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah. And it's really easy to navigate, it's an online toolkit, but it's also available for download as a pdf at [youthpower.org](https://youthpower.org).

So I definitely encourage people to go over and check it out. And we'll have the links available to it on the PYD Lab webpage as well.

So let's hop into your PYD recommendations.

This is the fun part of the podcast, where we ask our guests to come in with three recommendations.

One is ‘P’ for “Published.”

Which is a published reading source.

It could be a book, article, or report.

The second stands for “Youth.”

It could be a resource or a project that you know of that's either authored or led by a young leader.

And the third is “Disrupt.”

A disruptive, innovative idea or project or resource that tackles a youth-related challenge.

So, I’ll ask you about your first one ‘P’ for “Published.” What do you got?

**Katie Green:** This isn't necessarily super new, but I think the Youth Programming Assessment Tool—

YPAT assessment tool from USAID and FHI 360 is something that thinking about how to improve youth programming and really kind of granular measurable ways to me I think is something I’ve really been excited to dig more deeply into.

And I think it's something that anybody who's youth development practitioner should spending the time on.

I just um I’m researching another report I was doing started really digging into it and I-I think that that's something that addresses so many of the different components of a good program, that in a way that is more comprehensive than a lot of other things I’ve seen.

**Natasha Zena:** And what do you have for youth which is a resource or project you know of?

**Katie Green:** Last year right before the pandemic, I was in Madagascar conducting a youth assessment and there's two organizations that I got to visit and speak with the young leaders, and both I was just totally inspired by for somewhat different reasons.

One is the Youth First, Youth Impact Lab, and it's a well-established NGO youth-led youth-run in Madagascar, that the Youth Impact Lab in particular, I love the model.

They invite young people that basically have ideas for something that they want to change or improve in their community, in the country, and they do um intensive training with them on how to take that idea to the next step.

So it's kind of that real grassroots preparing the next generation, current generation of young leaders to turn their ideas into action. And then in the process building that network of young people around Madagascar who can continue to connect, build off each other's ideas, so I love that.

And then Teach for Madagascar was another uh very organization I visited again led by young people.

And I really like that because at in my heart I think service programs, volunteer programs, service learning is one of the ways in which embody that contributing part of positive youth development, so it helps young people develop that sense of “I have something to contribute.”

And it's a program that basically recruits young graduates, so there's a lot of young people that leave school that have a hard time securing employment and recruits them to teach, tutor, support young people who are in school or out of school.

So, it's- it's basically a service core model in Madagascar designed, led, and continued by young people.

And then for my third one, the disruptors, the organization Shujaaz in Kenya, to me it was just like all of my positive youth development dreams come true all in one organization.

**Natasha Zena:** Wow. (chuckle)

**Katie Green:** And it's well established, and I think probably at this point well-resourced.

I do think there's this thing that happens in our field and there's a lot of kind of a development attention around particular areas, but I haven't visited it, I don’t know it firsthand.

But everything I’ve read of helping support young people as content creators, they have SMS, WhatsApp platforms to do basically large-scale consultations with young people around the country and in East Africa, deriving information for that informs programs that are based on what young people priorities and interests actually are.

Um I think they have something called the Hustla MBA program which is small videos and tools that are accessible to young people on WhatsApp on starting their own small, microenterprises, small businesses.

And then they have their platform that creates stories and media around young people's interests so, that content development side that I think is super to me interesting like helping young people shape their own narratives about their life and what they want it to be and what it is,

I think is-is one of the other most compelling parts of what they do.

**Natasha Zena:** Thank you so much Katie for joining us today in the PYD Lab.

It's always such a pleasure when we can hear from the people behind the scenes who are actually executing and doing the work and building these wonderful resources that we all love at [youthpower.org](https://youthpower.org).

**Katie Green:** Oh. It has been my pleasure. Thank you so much.

**Natasha Zena:** Now, we'll hop into some recommendations for the episode.

Now obviously, we want you to check out the Youth Center Toolkit. That's what the episode was about.

But we wanted to be thoughtful when recommending additional resources.

How can we help you build upon the work that you will be doing if you utilize the Youth Center Toolkit?

Now our first recommendation is the YP2LE learning network webinar titled *Designing Better Youth Center and Safe Space Programming.*

In this webinar you'll hear from young leaders and experts on the importance of youth centers and safe spaces for youth.

They also delve into designing your own program.

This webinar went hand-in-hand with the Youth Center Toolkit and it was used as a kick-off event.

There's representatives from USAID, UN Habitat, Creative Associates, and Glasswing International.

Yes, you can access this webinar at [youthpower.org](https://youthpower.org), but I recommend that you check it out at our YouTube channel which is YouthPower YP2LE.

There is a vast catalog of resources on our YouTube channel. Webinars, training sessions, conversations and dialogue, just a vast number of videos uh with wonderful information for you and your team.

So, we'll make sure that there's a link to our YouTube channel right on the PYD Lab page for you.

Our second recommendation is the Youth Engagement Community of Practice.

This COP focuses on meaningful youth engagement in all aspects of programming.

Join other implementers, peers, and youth in important dialogue and activities available at [youthpower.org](https://youthpower.org).

You must be a registered member, if for some reason you're not already to participate in the COP.

But we'll make sure that there's a registration link available for you.

Registration is free.

It's simple, and quick.

Our third recommendation is the Positive Youth Development Illustrative Indicators.

The indicators included within the PYD Measurement Toolkit are designed to be used across multiple sectors and a variety of programs for youth. From Sexual and Reproductive Health, to Democracy and Governance.

Often these PYD indicators serve as intermediate indicators linking activities from a PYD program to long-term outcomes in specific sectors.

Now, the reason that this is a great resource, because it reiterates what Katie was talking about earlier.

When you build your program objectives then you look at it through the lens of theory of change this is another great tool to kind of use it hand in hand to make sure that your long-term outcomes are aligned with your PYD program.

(Music plays)

Until next time, I’m Natasha and you've been in the PYD Lab.