

# 101 Risky Ideas for your Youth Work

The Frontier Youth Trust is home for Pioneer Youth Work. We want to see practice increase and improve on the ground. Below are 101 risks that you could take to develop your youth work. If you want to discuss taking more risks with your youth work contact us at [info@fyf.org.uk](mailto:info@fyf.org.uk)

## Risks to take in meeting young people

1. Go and look for young people you have not met before by walking around your local streets and parks in the evening. How could you engage them?
2. Contact local professionals (like the police or housing association) and ask them about the issues they face with young people. Can you help?
3. Find a bench in a public space in your area – sit there for a few hours in the evening – what do you notice and who could you connect with?
4. With a team of 2 or 3 youth volunteers start a small street project: walk the area in the evening and chat to anyone you meet.
5. Go to somewhere outside your comfort zone where you might meet a different set of young people (for example, go to a Pride event).
6. Go on a hunt for local graffiti; what does it tell you about the area and local youth culture? How could you engage with this?
7. Try using your body language and position to show a shift in relationship. For example, first play table tennis with the net between you – then play pool, which has no boundaries round the table. Does this shift help progress the relationship?
8. Lend a new group of young people something and trust them to return it (i.e. bike pump, football)
9. Trust a new young person with personal information or a personal story to build rapport (i.e. where you live, a story of struggle from your youth, something difficult going on at home)
10. To build trust, ask a young person for advice on something important and take it (i.e. which garage to use to fix your car, or which barbers/hairdresser to use)

## Risks to take when developing relationships with young people

11. Pull out a genie lamp and ask people about their dreams.
12. Take a map of the area and ask young people to mark out important spots, what's good and what's not. Encourage them to tell the stories of their community.
13. Draw out a person and ask young people to add their passions (heart), skills (hands), and what they know about (head).
14. Give young people disposable cameras and ask them to document a day in their life. Look back on the pictures together.

15. Trust young people with something important (i.e. carrying and managing the money on the trip).
16. Be humble and ask the young people to teach you a skill. Could be a kick flip or how to knit.
17. Challenge bad behaviour with radical grace (i.e. if they steal from the tuck shop, next week give away sweets for free).
18. Invite someone to the group to teach everyone a new skill. Laugh through your successes and failures.
19. Break staid group habits by introducing a new activity (i.e. replace Xbox games with real life equivalents).
20. Invite young people to rename and rebrand the group or project.
21. Invite young people to plan the programme. You could split into groups and design competing programmes. Go through them together and vote on the best activity for each week.
22. Give the young people the budget for the Christmas party and let them do whatever they want.
23. Organise a trip to somewhere you know will be closed to see how the group manage disappointment. Let the group decide what to do instead.
24. Go to an escape room to put the group under pressure and build team work.
25. Have a cooking night but buy the wrong ingredients to encourage the group to use their creativity.
26. Invite the young people to your birthday party to build deeper relationships.
27. When the local council are debating an issue affecting young people, take your group to listen and be seen.
28. Ask young people to teach you a game.
29. Design a project with the young people with a big fundraising goal, like a trip abroad. No money from family allowed.
30. Give the planning and the budget for the term completely to the young people, no adult influence. If nothing gets planned nothing happens, stick to your guns. If young people plan something you're uncomfortable with go with it and see what happens.
31. Take a trip to the woods. At night. No torches allowed.
32. Take your group to compete against another group (i.e. football or board games).
33. Stop running your group at your venue for a term. Instead run it on the street or in the park. How do your relationships change and develop without the venue as a resource.
34. Plan a project that has small chance of success and don't step in when young people fail. Learn together through the failure.
35. Rearrange the layout of the youth club to change how people relate to one another.
36. Run a non-alcohol bar for the night's activity, but make it as authentic as possible with dyed lemonade as beer and beer and wine glasses.
37. Plan a surprise party.

38. Take your young leaders to steward at a local event.
39. Arrange to play young people online at a video game.
40. Invite a local police officer to the session.

## **Risks to take when developing spirituality with young people**

41. Rewrite a parable and base it in your local context. Tell the story to young people without revealing its biblical origins. What are their interpretations?
42. Get up early to watch the sunrise and pray for the day ahead.
43. Ask young people to write a new parable.
44. Go to a cathedral or ancient church. Do some research about the the faith communities that have been there over its history.
45. For an experience of awe and wonder, sleep out under the stars.
46. Identify some of the metaphors used to describe God (ie Lion, Teacher, Tower, Rock). Ask young people to come up with some new metaphors based on the local context.
47. Cancel youth group or church in order that young people might find God outside the spaces you can control.
48. Arrange a visit to the building and community of a different faith. Use the time as an opportunity to dialogue about what values are important to you all.
49. If you meet with young people to explore and discover God start calling it church rather than Bible study or youth group. How do young people react? When is church, church?
50. Agree as a group to fast from technology for a week.
51. 'Blessed are the poor' With your group, agree to sleep on the floor for week as a symbol of poverty. How was God with them this week?
52. Take a trip to visit the highest point in your county, look out at the view.
53. Plan a mini silent retreat. Give each young person a blanket and journal to record their thoughts and what God shares with them.
54. As a group plant a tree. Make the time each week to visit it and nurture it. Take pictures each week to show the slow growth. Ask the young people how their faith is slowly growing?
55. Participate in thoughtful protest. See [craftivist-collective.com](http://craftivist-collective.com) for inspiration.
56. Mow or build a labyrinth and walk it.
57. Go to a convent or monastery and learn from the faith communities there.
58. Go on a pilgrimage. Plan a multi day trip and visit a number of holy sights.
59. Get your group to invent their own religion. They must answer these questions: How did all this come to be? What should we do? How do we become whole? How do we relate to others? And, what happens when we die?
60. Use 'she' pronouns for God.
61. Try tai chi or yoga. What does movement, discipline and physicality mean for spirituality?
62. Choose a Bible story and and retell it with all the genders swapped.

63. Buy an old Bible and talk to the young people about bits of the bible they struggle with or disagree with. Start tearing them out, and ask them if it's still the same story.
64. Have a meal together in which you can only eat if someone else feeds you.
65. Invite someone deliberately provocative to your groups, e.g. an atheist, someone with different political views, or different worldview. Be humble and try to learn from them.
66. Take communion together but use something different and more contextual than bread and wine. Ask young people if it changes the meaning?
67. Look online for the pictures of the Buddhist monk who prayed in the same spot for 20 years and wore away footprints in the wooden floor. Ask young people about what it means to be committed.
68. Set up a plate of donuts with a sign saying do not touch and don't refer to them for the whole session. Next week start a discussion on temptation.
69. Create a Doubt Box. Encourage young people to anonymously write down their doubts about their faith. Acknowledge them but don't necessarily try to solve them.
70. Go on a prayer walk around your local area. Take the time to listen to what God is already doing in the community rather than praying for it.
71. As a group go plastic free for a week. Discuss what God has to say about how we treat our environment.
72. Send young people out into the community to take pictures of God at work.
73. Play a video game together as a spiritual experience. Good examples are Journey and Flower for the PS4.
74. Challenge the group to live for a week without spending money.
75. Give your group the challenge of planning and cooking a meal together. Give them no help or input and let them serve.
76. Cancel your planned residential, instead go on a holiday as a group without an agenda.
77. Work together to create a weekly community ritual which is significant to your group.
78. Build a community cairn.
79. Deliberately go on a long journey with your group, at an unusual time. Actively build relationships on the journey not at the destination.
80. Have a liminal experience together.
81. Ask everyone to be honest with each other. Set the mood appropriately.
82. Run a safari meal but visit homes of different faiths.
83. Run a worship event and either have no sung worship or only pop songs.
84. Change a bible passage into a different language through google translate and back into english. At what point does meaning get lost?
85. Hold a mock funeral. Use the opportunity to discuss loss.
86. Write a liturgy for a significant moment in young people's lives.
87. Go to a local Pride event and be a positive presence.

## **Risks to take as a project or starting a new project**

88. Create a local social media group for young people in your area.
89. Ask a local diversity group to go through your media, like your website, and ask them to point out text and images that don't promote inclusion.
90. Run a holiday lunch club with the support of other local groups in your area.
91. Start a project that intentionally goes out into the community to meet young people. Build relationships authentically where young people are and don't try to bring back into the youth club or church.
92. Give out hot chocolate at the local park every week for a year.
93. Build links, and do a joint project with another group that your group don't normally mix with. (i.e. young people from a different area, background, culture, or religion).
94. Offer bacon sandwiches at the bus stop before school or start a breakfast club.
95. Start a social enterprise.
96. Hold a community festival such as skate jam.
97. Start a new youth club night, or safe space, for group you don't normally work with like LGBTQ or youth homelessness.
98. Work with the young people to arrange a protest.
99. Set up a listening booth in the local park for a summer.
100. Ask your local newspaper if you can have a regular young people's column.
101. With a group of young people, set up a small fund that gives money to other groups wanting to improve their community. Research the SOUP crowdfunding process as inspiration.