Adult Rating of Youth

Manual and Guide
Updated March 2022

Introduction

The **Adult Rating of Youth (ARY)** asks staff to rate young people's *optimal socio-emotional behavioural skills* based on behaviours displayed during programme activities, as observed during several programme offering sessions. ARY scores can be used to indicate young people's *socio-emotional mental skills*. Staff should observe each young person for at least four hours of programme activities before using the ARY. The ARY can be used as a pre-test for programme planning purposes and, also, as a post-test for assessing SEL behavioural and mental skill growth. This manual includes the following sections to support successful understanding and implementation of the ARY:
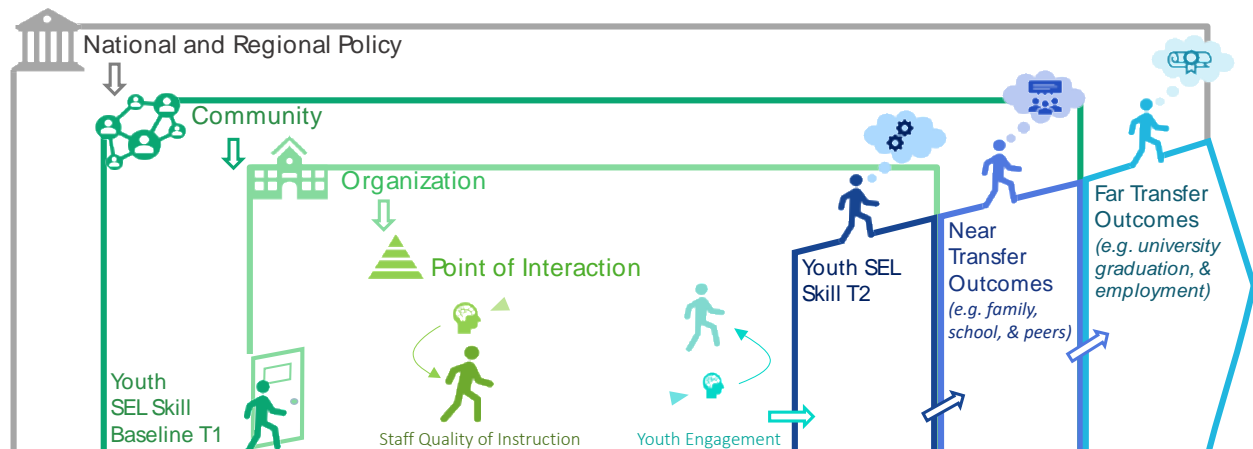
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Theory of Change

The user guide is based on the Outcomes Framework 2.1, which sets out how youth provision contributes to improvements in outcomes for young people. The Outcomes Framework 2.1 includes a theory of change that details how quality youth provision can lead to socio-emotional development for young people. In summary of Figure 1:

- High-quality staff practices and content offered at the point of interaction, where staff and young people meet during provision, are likely to lead to higher levels of youth engagement during each session or interaction.
- Young people bring with them a set of experiences and beliefs about themselves and the world around them, shaped by the contexts in which they are living and learning. This affects how young people engage with youth provision.
- Over time and multiple interactions, the combination of high-quality staff practices and young people's engagement at the point of interaction promotes the growth of socio-emotional skills.
- With sufficient participation in, and intensity of exposure to, high-quality settings, the effects of socio-emotional skill growth will transfer to other settings.
- This includes the 'near transfer' of socio-emotional skills to family, school, and peers and the 'far transfer' of socio-emotional skills to subsequent life course events or experiences, such as early adulthood health, education, and employment. Young people continue to further apply and grow their socio-emotional skills in these settings.
- Improvement in socio-emotional skills is linked to longer-term impacts including an improved ability to cope with the transition into adulthood, alongside long-term improvements in mental and physical health, educational attainment, sustainable employment, finances, secure housing, positive relationships and personal safety.

Figure 1: Theory of Change

About the ARY

The Adult Rating of Youth (ARY) is an observational rating instrument used to assess *optimal* social ane emotional behavioural skills generated by three distinct but interrelated aspects of mental skill (i.e., schemas, beliefs, and awareness). Optimal skills are the best someone can do while receiving high-quality support to enact these skills within, for example, informal youth work The ARY focuses on specific observable behaviours associated with the socio-emotional learning of youth from 5 to 18 years of age and can be used within the context of any type of youth provision[1].

The ARY was not designed to be an exhaustive measure of socio-emotional skills; rather, it was designed to focus on a few key types of behavioural skill related especially to emotion regulation (i.e., schemas) and reflective thinking (i.e., awareness). However, the ARY also includes two optional scales that are focused on youth behaviours that are hypothesised to reflect beliefs about emotion (i.e., Emotion Knowledge) and social equity (i.e., Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion). If your primary goal is to assess socio-emotional skill growth, we generally recommend using observational measures like the ARY because they focus on optimal behavioural skills, which we view as the most valid and sensitive (to change) information about socio-emotionalskills.

The ARY was developed by first selecting and modifying items from the Adult Rating of Youth Behaviour that pertained specifically to schemas or awareness and then by creating additional behavioural-observation items aligned primarily to those two neglected but fundamental aspects of mental skills: schemas and awareness. Each item was refined by iterating variations in wording and examples with experienced staff in youth provision. The Centre for Youth Impact is supporting a range of organisations to trial use of this new measurement tool. If you would like to use the measure please contact us so we can support your use and understanding of the measure with additional materials, training and, or coaching.

Although behaviour tends to be a combined function of schemas, beliefs, and awareness, each ARY item was designed to focus on either schemas or awareness. For example, according to our multilevel [neuroperson](#) theoretical model (Peck & Smith, 2020), within the complex interplay among mental skills, and between mental and behavioural skills, some kinds of behaviour (e.g., impulsivity) tend to be influenced more by schemas, whereas other kinds of behaviour (e.g., "paying attention") tend to be influenced more by awareness.

Validity

Psychometric details, including validity and reliability information, for the ARY are pending. However, given the very close alignment between (a) our conceptual definitions of mental and behavioural skills and (b) the item content on the ARY, we view the ARY as a highly face valid measure of youths' optimal socio-emotionalbehavioural skills and the socio-emotionalmental skills most likely to influence them.

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[1] There is also a youth self-report version of this ARY measure, called the 'Self-Report of Youth' (SRY), that can also be used to assess young people's *optimal* behavioural skills as aligned to the neuroperson model. The SRY asks young people to rate their own socio-emotional behavioural skills based on the behaviours they use or 'employ' during provision, over multiple sessions.

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In addition, given our experience with this and similar measures, and despite including very few items per construct, we expect the ARY scale scores to reflect high levels of construct validity and be sufficiently reliable; that is, alpha coefficients of reliability should generally exceed 0.70.

Analysis

After analysing the data, we generally provide reports to each organisation that show the four primary ARY scale scores (i.e., Broaden and Build Schemas, Narrow and Constrain Schemas, Awareness Focus, and Awareness Reflection) as a set of profiles (e.g., High, Moderate, and Low Skill) that characterise the participating youth, along with some basic descriptive information (e.g., the percentage of youth in each profile). In cases where organisations also include one or both of the ARY belief scales (i.e., Emotion Knowledge and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion), these profiles are composed of four or five scales. This optimal socio-emotional skill profile information can be used to inform future planning (e.g., organisations serving high percentages of youth in 'high-risk' ARY profiles may decide to focus programme activities more closely on the needs of these younge people). If the ARY is also used as a follow-up measure, then similar aggregate information can be used to assess socio-emotional skill change (e.g., by comparing the percent of youth in a high-risk ARY profile at baseline to the percentage of young people in a similar high-risk ARY profile at follow-up). Finding evidence of optimal socio-emotional skill growth using ARY scores supports conclusions like (a) the young people participating in this youth provision are improving their socio-emotional skills and, potentially, (b) the reason young people are improving their socio-emotional skills is because we are creating high-quality youth provision.

ARY Items

The ARY includes 10 core items (corresponding to the four primary scales), 14 additional items (corresponding to the two optional belief scales), and two additional "familiarity" questions about how well you know the youth that you are rating. The response scale for the core items, 3-12, and the optional belief items, 13-26, is:

Response Scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Never when supported	Rarely when supported	Sometimes when supported	Often when supported	Always when supported

Familiarity

1. How long have you known this young person? [1 = < 2 weeks; 2 = 2-8 weeks, 3 = 2-6 months; 4 = 6-12 months; 5 = a year or more]
2. For about how many hours of programme time have you observed this young person? [1 = < 4 hours; 2 = 4-8 hours, 3 = 8-16 hours; 4 = 16-32 hours; 5 = 32 hours or more]

Broaden and Build Schemas

3. How often did the young person act with initiative (e.g., voluntarily helped resolve a conflict between others; connected an activity to future plans and possibilities; explored options with curiosity)?

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4. How often did the young person respond adaptively to frustration during sessions (e.g., didn't blame self/others or give up; paused to calm down and tried again; sought help to overcome frustration)?

5. How often did the young person appear to be comfortable in the setting and confident in their behaviour (e.g., did not appear anxious when peers were acting out; appeared confident when trying out new tasks; remained calm when challenged)?

Narrow and Constrain Schemas

6. How often did the young person withdraw from participation (e.g., stopped paying attention; stopped participating in an activity; left the session without permission)?

7. How often did the young person get frustrated during moderately-challenging tasks, minor set-backs, disagreements, or feedback (e.g., experience small setbacks as big failures; respond to neutral feedback as if it were critical; argue over minor social challenges)?

8. How often did the young person engage in disruptive behaviour (e.g., displayed strong negative emotions through verbal or body language; interfered with others' space and focus; interfered with their own learning by talking or ignoring etc.)?

Awareness Focus

9. How often did the young person stay focused and on-task despite distractions (e.g., stayed on-task while others were off-task; paid attention to staff while others were talking or packing-up to leave; recognized and described feelings during moments of upset)?

10. How often did the young person engage in practices that required sustaining the focus awareness (e.g., practiced one-pointed concentration; practiced non-judgmental self-awareness, or mindfulness; practiced somatic experiencing, focused breathing, guided imagery, etc.)?

Awareness Reflection

11. How often did the young person use reflection as part of the problem-solving process (e.g., considered alternative plans for solving a problem; chose words carefully during a social conflict; showed thoughtfulness while describing their feelings)?

12. How often did the young person smoothly transition from one task to another (e.g., settled in quickly and on-time following arrival or snack break; put their phone away immediately after being asked to pay attention; did not keep working on part "A" of a task when asked to move on to part "B")?

(Optional ARY *Belief* Scales)

Emotion Knowledge

13. How often did the young person accurately name personal feelings (e.g., "I was angry," "that made me happy," or "I'd be surprised if…")?

14. How often did the young person describe feelings using more than simple words like happy or sad (e.g., embarrassed, exuberant, ashamed)?

15. How often did the young person accurately name *other* people's feelings (e.g., "she was happy" or "he looked frustrated")?

16. How often did the young person describe the reason for their feelings (e.g., "I got into a fight with my mom," "he called me names," or "that problem was annoying")?

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17. How often did the young person effectively express their emotions to others (e.g., put their feelings into words; used phrases like "I felt…" instead of "you're wrong")?
18. How often did the y oung person identify the relation between the feelings of one person and the feelings of another (e.g., "she's sad because her mom is sick")?
19. How often did the young person identify the relation between situations and emotions (e.g., describes how peers would feel if their event was canceled)?

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
20. How often did the young person challenge or correct other's bias or use of intolerant language (e.g., "that didn't seem very nice" or "that sounds racist")?
21. How often did the young person seem tolerant, accepting, or appreciative of physical, social, or cultural differences in other children and adults?
22. How often did the young person stand up for other youth when they were teased, insulted, or marginalized?
23. How often did the young person verbally demonstrate active role-taking (e.g., considered themself in someone else's situation)?
24. How often did the young person verbally acknowledge how someone else's feelings or opinions differed from their own?
25. How often did the young person modify their behaviour to acknowledge the value of someone else's ideas (e.g., went along with a plan, even though they didn't agree with it)?
26. How often did the young person demonstrate an understanding of the value of a diverse community (e.g., acknowledge how people with different strengths and weaknesses can work together to achieve a goal)?

How and When to Use

The ARY should be used by staff to assess a young peson's optimal socio-emotional behavioural skills. It can be used after at least two weeks (or four hours of program participation) from when the youth first entered the program in order to assess their *baseline* socio-emotionalbehavioural skills. Baseline socio-emotionalbehavioural skills information can be used to better familiarise you with the young people attending the youth provision and plan programme activities (e.g., to tailor programme activities to the needs of the youth who are attending). If the aim is to assess 'pre-test' skill information for the purposes of assessing change with a post-test, it is best to collect ARY information as early as possible (i.e., near the four-hour mark of programme participation) because later assessments may not accurately reflect youth's 'pre-test' skills (i.e., they are likely already growing their skills during the first few weeks of programme participation).

The ARY can also be used as a pre-test, near the beginning of the programme, together with a post-test, shortly after or near the end of the programme, in order to assess optimal socio-emotional behavioural skill growth. Although ARY scores tend to be especially sensitive to SEL skill growth, if your primary aim is to assess socio-emotional skill growth, we generally recommend waiting at least two to three months to conduct follow-up ARY ratings. Information about optimal socio-emotional behavioural skill growth can be used to understand both youth's development and the relation of this

development to other aspects of youth provision (e.g., the impact of instructional quality on optimal socio-emotional behavioural skill growth).

Scoring

The mean of the response values across all items within a scale should be calculated to produce a single scale score for each young person. If some item responses are missing, scale scores can be calculated as long as there are responses to at least two thirds of the items in each scale (but remember to calculate the mean score based only on the number of questions for which youth have actually provided a response). Each of the scale scores should range from 1 to 5.

Instructions

Read the statements about youth behaviour and, using the given response scale, mark the circle that best describes how often you saw the behaviour *during the past two weeks* (or *four hours* of program activity). Please do not skip any items. There are no right or wrong answers.

Protocol

Please read and carefully follow these criteria for observational ratings using the ARY:

1. Identify the adult who will conduct the ratings of each participating youth's behaviour.
   a. The adult rater should be a person who regularly leads the session in which the young person participates and has had the opportunity to observe the young person for approximately four hours of programme-offering time, over a period at least two weeks, before completing the ARY;
   b. Although there is no training requirement, we recommend training on the use of the ARY, and the adult who rates youth on the ARY should, ideally, be among the best trained in the areas of youth development, social-emotional skills, and adult practices that promote positive youth development and socio-emotional skill growth.
2. Identify the young person who will be rated, and fill in the Unique ID register in the Excel Template provided.
   a. The Unique ID register template provided is **only** for the internal use of participant organizations. The template will automatically generate unique IDs for each youth whose behaviour is being rated.
   b. These IDs must then be used in completing the Ratings Template, as set out below.
   c. In order to separate personally identifiable data from ratings data, it is crucial that these two templates are saved in **separate**, private, secure, and memorable locations (e.g., in two different folders on a password-protected computer).
3. Observe youth during programme activities for at least two weeks and for *at least* two hours per week of program time. The ratings should be based on direct observations of the youth, considering only behaviours the rater has actually seen. Behaviours that were reported to have occurred in other settings, or were not observed by the rater, should not be scored.
4. With reference to the guidance below, complete ratings for youth using the Ratings template provided.
   a. Rate only those young people who have been identified (as outlined in step 2 of the protocol).

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    b.   Ensure that you correctly enter the Unique ID from the register you have completed. The easiest way to do this is to copy and paste the ID from the register into the ratings template.

    c.   Allow approximately five minutes to compete the ratings for each youth (e.g., plan for 50 minutes to rate 10 young people).

    d.   The ratings should be completed during a quiet time where there are no distractions.

5.   For most or all of the rating items, we could have added the phrase "when appropriate" because we want to know how often the behaviour is observed in situations where the behaviour is considered appropriate for that situation.

    a.   For example, for the question, "How often did the young person accurately name personal feelings?" using the response scale option "4" (i.e., "often when supported") means that they usually use an emotion word that fits what they appear to you to be feeling; it should not be used to mean that they are talking about their feelings all the time.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please do not skip any items.

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