A strength-based approach leads with the positive and values trust, respect, intentionality & optimism.

A strength-based approach is a perspective more than a set of hard and fast rules.

Resource: Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region | Strength-based Approaches Backgrounder (2009)
What is a strength-based APPROACH?

A strength-based approach is a manner of doing things rooted in the belief that

...people (and groups of people i.e. organizations, neighborhoods, communities) have existing competencies;

...people have resources and are capable of learning new skills & solving problems;

...people can use existing competencies to identify and address their own concerns;

...people can be involved in the process of discovery and learning.
Using a strengths-based frame or positivity approach means you are working from a place where the focus is on moving the conversation or activity forward;

Using a strength-based approach does not mean you have to withhold “negative” or “diminishing” topics (behavior, programmatic structure, attitude, statistics).
Liberates people from a sense of hopelessness and cynicism and opens-up learning.

Common frames with a STRENGTHS-BASED focus:

- What gives life
- What is working
- What you want
- What is possible
- What is propelling you forward
- What you can do

Deficit-based thinking and questions triggers “a threat response” and shuts down learning. Common frames with a deficit focus:

What gives control

What is not working

What you don’t want

What you need

What you don’t have

What is problematic

What you cannot do

What is holding you back

Analysis of problem
Strength-based FOCUS

- Personal Relationships
- Acknowledge Contribution
- Attend to the Context / Systems
- Invite Meaningful Participation
- Provide Opportunities for Skill-building/ Learning
- Recognize Interrelationships
- Concentrate on Solutions and Potential
Strengths Based Approaches to Change and Everything Else

- Desired outcomes can best be achieved when attention is focused on discovering these collectively and connecting them to a shared vision;
- There is always something that is working well;
- Focusing on what is working and how to build on this creates collective resiliency;
- Solutions exist within communities and organizations and are waiting to be discovered;
- There are hidden and unrecognized assets, strengths and resources in every individual, family, organization and community;

Strengthening Based Practices

- be inclusive
- be action oriented
- let citizens direct the resources
- map the assets
- lead by stepping back
- nurture a sense of ownership

What are strength-based PROCESSES?

Appreciative Inquiry

CAPACITY BUILDING

asset-based community development (abcd)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Developmental Assets

positive youth development

RESILIENCY

Restorative Justice

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

social development

Solution - Focused Therapy

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

youth engagement

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