

STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING AUTONOMY

Purpose: To equip facilitators with practical, participant-centered approaches that build self-initiative, decision-making skills, and confidence in youth. These strategies can be applied during activities, group discussions, and one-on-one interactions.

1

Offer Meaningful Choices

- Provide participants with options for how they engage (e.g., leading an activity segment, or selecting materials).
- Ensure choices are real and relevant

2

Use Guided Questions Instead of Direct Instructions

- Replace step-by-step commands with prompts that encourage problem-solving.
- Example: Instead of "Do it this way," try "How do you think we could make this work?"

3

Encourage Peer Collaboration

- Pair or group participants to brainstorm, plan, and solve challenges together.
- Assign roles that rotate to allow everyone to experience leadership.

4

Normalize Trial and Error

- Frame mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than failures.
- Share your own "learning moments" to model resilience and adaptability.

5

Recognize Effort and Process, Not Just Results

- Acknowledge persistence, creativity, and thoughtful decision-making.

6

Create Space for Reflection

- Build in moments for participants to think about what they learned and what they'd do differently next time.
- Use your Step Back Journal prompts to make this a consistent practice.