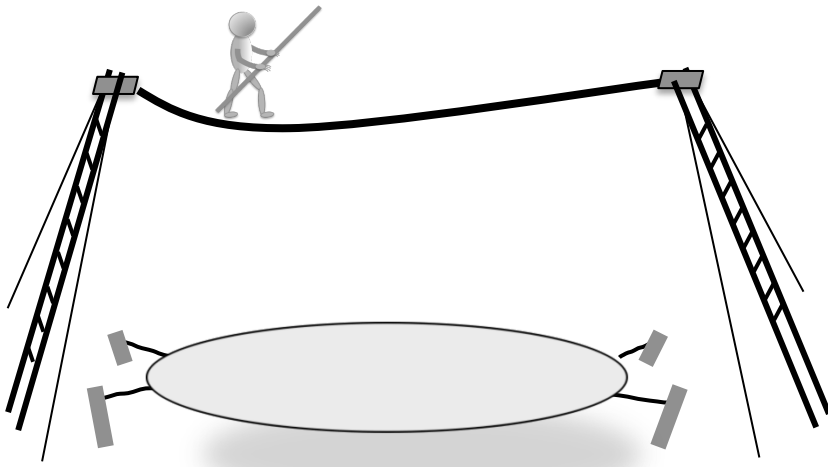


# **The Tightrope**

Helping young people to recognise their  
strengths, risks and needs

## **Version 3.1**

Inform guidance aligned with the AssetPlus Framework,  
Good Lives Model, Signs of Safety® and Desistance Theories



*The Tightrope is an analogy-based tool designed to assist practitioners working with children, young people and families to engage them in thinking about past harm, current strengths and supports, risks or dangers and the steps needed to achieve future goals.*

Original Tightrope Tool © Dr Roberta Evans 2014

Version 2 – aligned with Signs of Safety® wording © Dr Roberta Evans and Louise Jones

Version 3.1 – aligned with YJB AssetPlus framework, Good Lives Model, Motivational Interviewing and Signs of Safety® © Dr Roberta Evans 2016

Produced by: Vlinder Consultancy Ltd ([www.vlinder.co.uk](http://www.vlinder.co.uk))

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**Use of the materials:** these are designed as a tool for engaging young people in an open and positive discussion about their assessment and/or plans and should only be used by practitioners who are experienced and qualified to undertake assessments and feel confident to discuss these with young people. The authors and publisher cannot accept responsibility for how the tool is used and expressly disclaim liability for the tool's application in practice. The responsibility for the application of this tool lies with the individual practitioner, who should ensure they have access to appropriate on-going support for themselves and their clients. Training and consultancy is available on request.

**Avoid bombarding the young person with questions** – please take your time to map things out and select just a couple of questions from sections.

For more information about other versions, training and access to the toolkit and guidance supporting this tool please email: [roberta@vlinder.co.uk](mailto:roberta@vlinder.co.uk)

## INTRODUCTION:

Approaching adolescence can be a time of imbalance, taking risks, becoming independent and growing into adulthood. It can be a time of testing limits, experimenting with new things, working out friendships as well as making the most of opportunities, building an identity, having fun and learning.

Sometimes young people get involved in unsafe behaviour – including the misuse of drugs or alcohol, breaking the law, harming themselves or others. This can be for many different reasons. Most young people grow out of the behaviour and will have strengths within them or people around them that help them stay safe, avoid getting into trouble and move on to achieve.

This toolkit is designed to help us talk about all of these things and map out what we are worried about, what is going well and what needs to happen by using an analogy of adolescence and ‘youth risk’ like someone balancing on a tightrope.

- Each person will have skills and attributes to help them grow up well. These are the internal strengths to ‘walk the rope’ and ‘stay balanced’.
- There may be a number of steps up to the tightrope that represent the things we’re worried about and lets us know how high (or dangerous) things are.
- Having a strong safety net (that is not too tight or too loose) will be protective during this time and make it easier to be supported to take the steps needed.
- When thinking about how high the tightrope is it’s important to think about might happen – what might ‘falling off’ look like.
- Sometimes a ‘muddy path’ or uneven ground can make things more wobbly
- A strong foundation of positive experiences can help make things more stable
- For young people, being on the tightrope can mean different things, it can be exciting, scary, fun and risky, but it’s not safe to stay up too high for too long. It’s important to have an idea of what ‘safe ground’ looks like.
- Thinking about the steps needed to get to safe ground will be important.
- In order to take the steps to be back down on ‘safe ground’ think about what motivates us to do this – and this will be different for different people.

**You are invited to use one of the attached templates to discuss and map these areas.**

## PLEASE READ:

The Tightrope is an analogy-based assessment and planning tool. The one-page form is to help discuss and map out all the areas involved in assessing strengths, risks and needs (internal and external, past and current) for an individual and/or family to plan for positive change.

There are two blank templates available – the choice of use depending on practitioner preference. Included in this pack is evidence of how the analogy aligns with current frameworks and an inform guidance with questions to support a guided discussion around the analogy. The inform guidance has been adapted to incorporate wording from AssetPlus, Good Lives Model, Motivational Interviewing and Signs of Safety® as an aid for practitioners engaging young people in assessments and plans.

Practitioners using this template are asked to do so only if they are confident and skilled in undertaking assessments and engaging young people (and parents/carers) in discussions about risk and resilience. The Tightrope is particularly helpful to those trained in Motivational Interviewing and Brief Solution Focused techniques. The guidance offers examples of questions from various frameworks – please choose only a few to use. In any case, practitioners need to work with the young person to identify their strengths and needs – and ensure the young person knows what support is available and how to access this. Practitioners also need to ensure they have resilience and support in their practice.

The original Tightrope is part of a larger toolkit that was designed for professionals working with young people involved in offending, substance misuse, self harm or sexually harmful behaviour. The full toolkit includes 8 sets of prompt cards with plain statements linked to each area of assessment and planning that are produced from relevant research and guidance. It is supported by a manual that provides references for each prompt. A pack is also available for managers supporting resilience in practitioners in vulnerable professions.

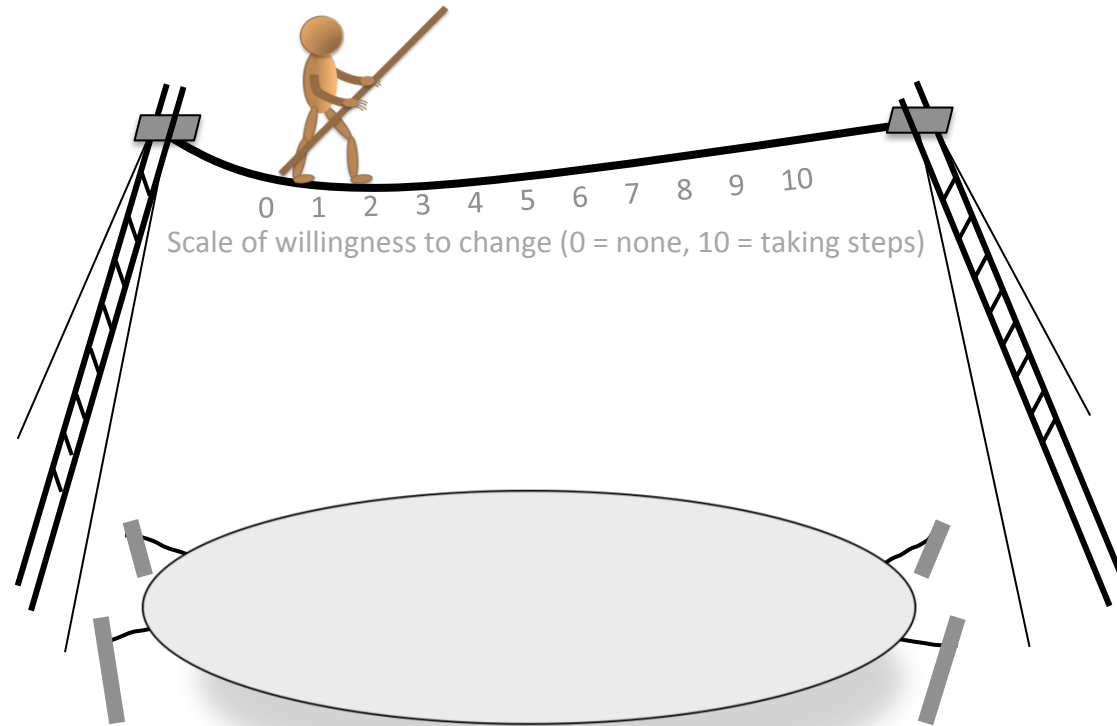
For more information about these packs or training or to send feedback please contact: [roberta@vlinder.co.uk](mailto:roberta@vlinder.co.uk)

# The Tightrope

Worries?

Working well?

Needs to happen?



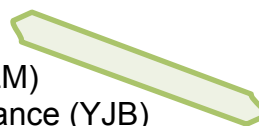
# Tightrope prompts aligned to Good Lives Model (GLM), AssetPlus (YJB), Signs of Safety (SOS) and Motivational Interviewing (MI)

## Potential harm (worries)



Explore presenting problems (GLM)  
Predict future harmful behaviors and adverse outcomes (YJB)  
Create danger statement (SOS)  
Identify what needs to change (MI)

## Internal strengths (balance beam)



Internal strengths and expertise (GLM)  
Coping strategies supporting desistance (YJB)  
Positive attributes / what is liked about them? (SOS)  
Belief that change is possible (MI)

## Professionals' and others' actions

Construct intervention plan (GLM)  
What needs to happen (SOS)  
Resources, Other plans, Workers / Parents actions in the targets (YJB)  
How we help achieve change (MI)

## Dynamic risks (steps up)



Consider negative environment – (GLM)  
Factors against desistance (YJB)  
Complicating factors (SOS)  
Sustain talk against change (MI)

Listen for commitment talk / readiness to change (MI)  
Consider capacity or willingness to change (YJB / SOS)



**Motives** Function of offending (goods) (GLM)  
Values, beliefs & motives (YJB)  
What and who most important to them (SOS)  
What supports change? (MI)

## Steps needed



Engage young person in an intervention plan (GLM)  
Identify steps needed (SOS)  
Young Person's Actions (YJB)  
Formulate specific plan of action (MI)

## External support (net)

Consider positive environment (GLM)  
External protective factors for desistance (YJB)  
Who are the people that care most (SOS)  
Who might support change? (MI)



## Past harm (muddy path)



Explore criminogenic needs (GLM)  
Static risk factors and past harm (YJB)  
Consider past harm (SOS)  
Why is change important? (MI)



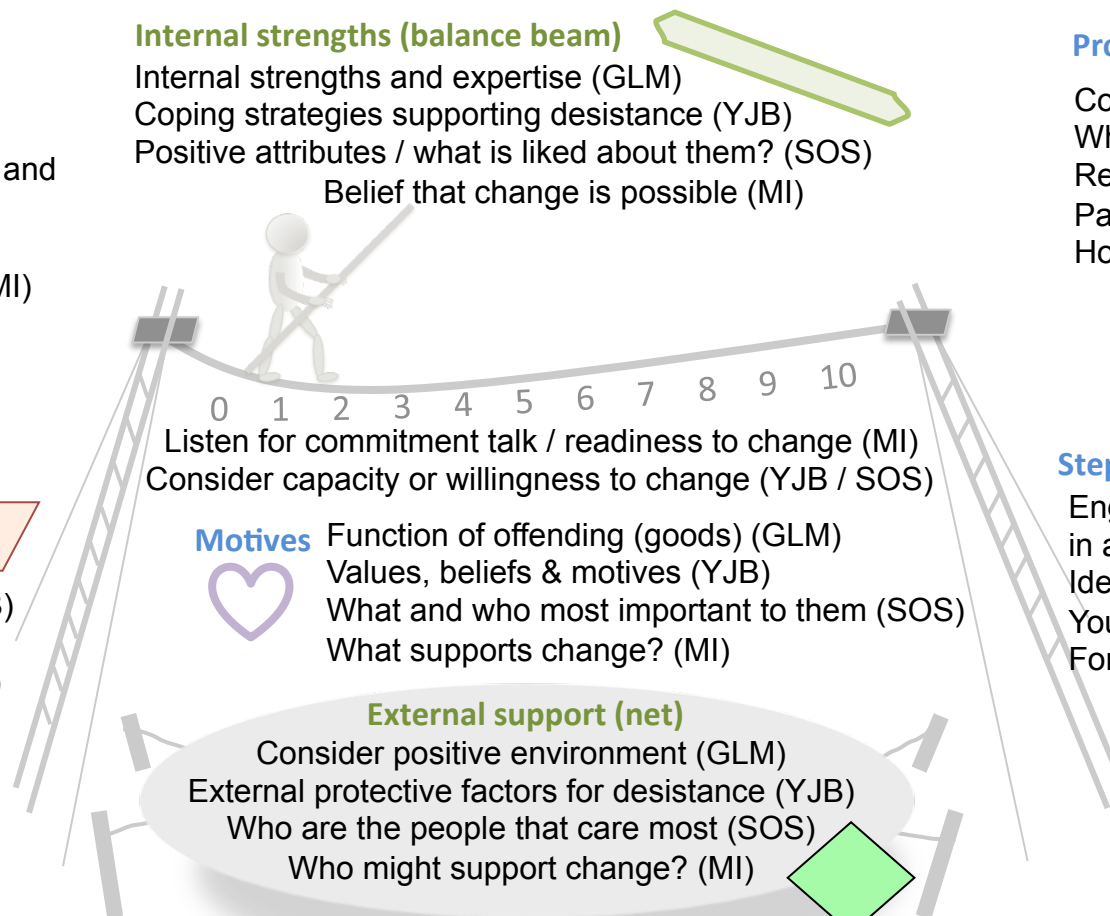
## Past positives (foundation)

Outline past positive experiences (GLM)  
Foundations for change / periods of desistance (YJB)  
Past proven safety / exceptions to harm (SOS)  
When this problem has been managed well before (MI)

## Goals



'Good life' (GLM)  
Aims and outcomes (not reoffend / not hurt others / stay safe / repair harm / reach potential (YJB)  
Safety achieved to close case (SOS)  
'Problem sorted' (MI)



## Worries?

What might 'falling off' look like?  
What's the worst that could happen?

## Working well?

What strengths do I have to stay balanced?

## Needs to happen?

What can others do to support me?

What are the current worries that make the Tightrope higher?

Steps I plan to take

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Scale of willingness to change (0 = none, 10 = taking steps)

What and who are most important to me?

Who is my safety net?

What are the past worries that make the path 'muddy' or 'wobbly'?

Foundations for change / past safety  
- when have things worked well in the past?

What does safe ground look like?

