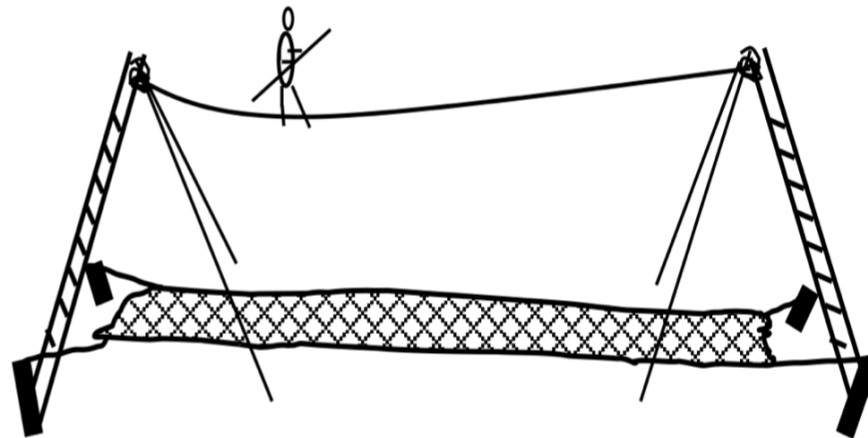
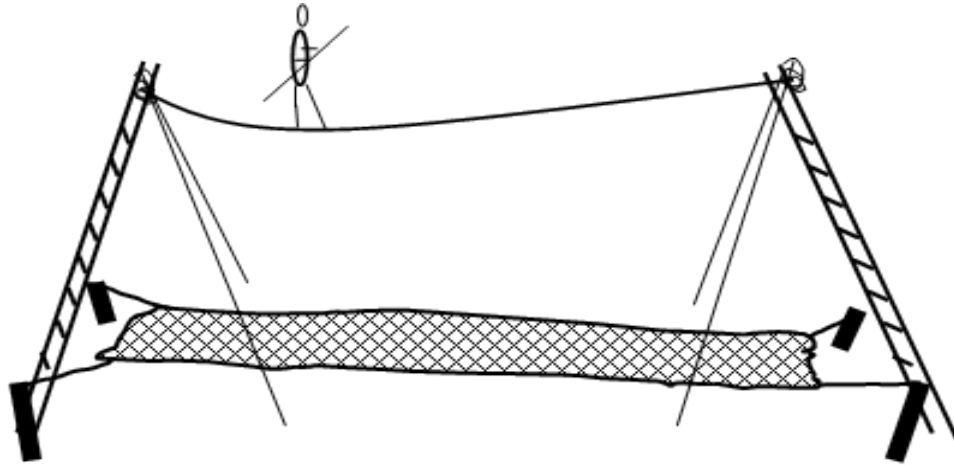


Tightrope



Helping young people recognise
and manage risk positively



The toolkit is an analogy-based model designed to assist professionals working with young people to engage them in thinking about past harm and positive foundations, current strengths and supports, risks or dangers and the steps needed to achieve future goals.

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Be mindful of when using this toolkit with young people and/or their parents/carers that discussions can become sensitive and unfold in various ways. It was designed for experienced practitioners who should be provided with training and guidance on the use of the 'Tightrope model'. For further information about the 'Tightrope model' and other tools for engaging young people and their parents / carers in discussions about risk and safety please contact: dr.robertaevans@gmail.com or info@vlinder.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION:

Approaching adolescence can be time of imbalance, taking risks, becoming independent from adults 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 loads.

Sometimes we get involved in unsafe behaviour – misuse drugs or alcohol, break the law, harm ourselves or others. There is a lot of research around why young people get involved in ‘risky’ behaviour and continue to take risks – was it something in their past? their friends? their beliefs or values? Professionals and researchers also want to know what strengths young people have (within them and around them) to help them stay safe, avoid getting into trouble, move on and reach their potential.

This toolkit is designed to help us talk about these things and uses a metaphor to think about adolescence and ‘youth risk’ like someone walking along a tight rope high above the ground.

- There are a number of steps up to the tight rope (these help us explore what has gone on before that may explain the current situation)
- There is a path and foundation that led to those first steps.
- The steps indicate how high, or volatile, a situation may be and it’s important to also think about any behaviour that means the current situation is more worrying or risky.
- Being on the tight rope can be exciting and scary, it can be fun and risky, but it’s not safe to stay up too high for too long.
- The goal is to be back down on ‘safe ground’ – what this looks like will be different for different people.
- Getting to our goal involves walking the line and taking the important steps down. How far someone is along the line and how long this takes will also be different for different people.
- It helps to have balance, motivation and not too much ‘windy weather’.
- Having a strong safety net (that is not too tight or too loose) will also make it easier to be supported on the way if we ever slip.

NOTES:

This toolkit has a one-page analogy-based assessment tool and eight sets of prompts. These prompt cards are specifically designed for professionals working with young people involved in offending, substance misuse, self harm or sexually harmful behaviour. There is a supporting guidance document that provides references to research or guidance used in developing the prompts. Blank cards are also provided so young people can identify for themselves different strengths or risks.

The one-page tool can however be used independently of the prompts, which are designed as an aid for discussion and to assist with screening or assessments. The prompts may support a full exploration of the potential areas of harm, strengths, safety, risks, dangers and needs. The tool and analogy could however be applied in early work with adolescents and could be used in practice in a variety of ways, such as: group exercises, fun physical activities, flipchart discussions, picture building and family work.

The prompts are presented in a general order of looking from past to present to future (left-to-right on the tightrope picture). However any area can be looked at in any order. It is probably best to leave the future actions (steps down) until last.

Feedback from young people and practitioners who have used this model would be very welcome! Email: info@vlinder.co.uk

Tightrope model for building a picture of risks, strengths and needs

