

Inspiring Youth

feeding spirit, finding self

The Magic of Childhood, the Voice of Youth and a Vision for Society

“Do you believe in fairies?” asks Peter Pan as Tinkerbell lies dying. Only the answer ‘yes’ can bring her back to life.

It is well known that young children believe in the existence of fairies and for them the land of Tinkerbell and fairy tales is a reality. What happens to that belief as the child grows through youth to adulthood? Perhaps we are doing our children a disservice when later in life we assume that magic no longer exists for them.

In ancient cultures, as in tribal cultures today, children were supported through key stages of their development by their community offering Rites of Passage, ceremonies and group support. The Elders of the Community played a crucial role in this, passing on wisdom and traditions, actively providing opportunities for boys to become men and for girls to take their place in society as young women.

Children and young people have needs and express themselves on many levels. Recognition of physical and emotional development has become well established. But how are the spiritual needs of young people met today?

When large numbers of young people are self-harming, develop eating disorders and have poor self-image and low self-esteem, something is lacking in their life. It appears that fundamentalist organisations and networks have an appeal which our culture lacks, with a strong narrative of heroism, purpose and belonging. Could providing adequate rites of passage and spiritual support enable young people find their own vision and narratives, making sense of the world around them and preserving a sense of magic and personal power?

We wish to examine these issues and more. We wish to recognise and encourage young people's thirst for magic, their need for heroism and belonging and their need to be heard and taken seriously, bearing in mind that today's young people are the “Earth keepers” and decision makers of the future.

Our Aim

The Inspiring Youth project aims to bring together people from all over the world who are passionate about working with children and “older” young people (teenagers and young adolescents) and young people themselves.

We wish to map what people are doing, within a wide range of professions and contexts, and make this information available to others through a listing on the Alliance for Childhood website, a Facebook group, a newsletter and possibly a booklet with stories, inspiration, practical information and contact details.

Our intention is to organise a conference with several events, initially in London, so we can all meet in person and share experiences.

We especially wish to invite young people themselves to speak about their concerns, needs and experiences, both in person and through stories, statements, art, videos or by any other means of their choice.

Join us

Our initiative is open to anyone who is interested. We wish to invite people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds and a variety of views and schools of thought to connect, exchange ideas, support each other, **allowing people to connect to others and putting like-minded people in touch with each other.**

We would like to hear from you if you are willing to participate and be listed in a directory so others can contact you. We also invite you to actively share information about this initiative with anyone you know who might be interested. We thank you in advance!

If you are passionate about the voices and concerns of young people and have an open mind – please get in touch with us and we will keep you posted on what unfolds!

Inspiring Youth Forum

We are organising a series of talks and events in London where people are invited to speak about innovative work with young people and where young people themselves share their concerns and interests.

Previous topics included: **Grandparents - the wisdom keepers with Louise Coe and Sally Jenkinson; The Silent Scream - self harm and the needs of today's young people with Loraine Doherty and Transitions - rites of passage in contemporary life. We are now making a series of short films based on the presentations which will appear on the UK website, www.allianceforchildhood.co.uk under 'Inspiring Youth'.**

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