

WHAT'S REALLY THE OBSTACLE?

A diagnostic tool for youth workers

SKILLS GAP

Core signal → "I don't know how yet."
You may observe → Avoiding new tasks • Over-preparing • Hesitating before starting
Often misread as → Low ability
What usually helps → Step-by-step learning • Practice without pressure • Clear expectations

Youth worker focus → Teach and support learning, not performance.

BELONGING GAP

Core signal → "People like me don't usually do this."
You may observe → Feeling like an outsider • Low participation • Withdrawing in male-dominated spaces
Often misread as → Lack of interest
What usually helps → Peer connection • Visible role models • Explicit inclusion

Youth worker focus → Design environments where belonging is visible.

SAME BEHAVIOUR.
DIFFERENT BARRIERS.
DIFFERENT RESPONSES.

CONFIDENCE GAP

Core signal → "What if I fail?"
You may observe → Silence • Downplaying achievements • Seeking reassurance
Often misread as → Shyness
What usually helps → Normalising mistakes • Feedback on process • Permission to try

Youth worker focus → Create safety before expecting confidence.

STRUCTURAL BARRIER

Core signal → "The system is not built for me."
You may observe → Irregular attendance • Missed deadlines • Unequal participation
Often misread as → Low commitment
What usually helps → Flexibility • Clear information • Advocacy and adjustments

Youth worker focus → Change systems where possible, not expectations.

Before responding to certain behaviour, ask yourself:

- What changed recently?
- Which barrier fits best right now?
- Am I diagnosing or assuming?