

Twenty Elements in an Architectural Structure for
Youth & Community Development through Rites of Passage®.

These are guiding principles to explore community-based rite of passage. The goal of this framework is to describe the central elements in a community-based rites of passage. It can be useful for people working in education, youth development, community organizing or other health and wellness areas, especially when change occurs. It begins by asking a question. *What's the story* with how our children are doing? What are we doing, or not doing, to guide them through the passage to adulthood?

Element	Definition – Description
1. What's the Story?	Stories, myths, legends passed down from previous generations convey values & ethics that serve survival. Everyone has a story, which informs his or her worldview or paradigm that guides his or her lives and actions. <i>What's the story?</i> is an invitation to explore a particular situation and all of the other elements.
2. Community values & ethics	The hallmark of a community-based rite of passage strategy is to address the values and expectations that youth must acquire to insure the future success of the community. There must be deliberate structures that foster community conversations about mutually agreed upon expectations for behavior and values. This process must precede the creation of experiences that foster youths' understanding, appreciation and commitment to these expectations.
3. Paradigm Shift	Adolescent development is connected to a community development process rather than being seen solely as an intra-psychic phenomenon. Interventions are ecological rather than individually oriented. Exploration of the present situation & accept the possibility that changing views might be necessary.
4. Program success relies on relationships	Meaningful outcomes depend upon the quality of relationships between youth and adults, all adults and adults to the "program." Positive outcomes only occur when people within a setting are intimately connected to the creation and/or adaptation of a strategy. It is only then that a strategy can be implemented with sufficient commitment and creativity to make it a success.
5. You can only bring someone as far as you've been yourself	Relationships are key. Those who are <i>initiators of youth's coming of age</i> need training and professional development to build their personal awareness and resources. Individuals need to undergo their own initiatory experience and rite of passage to aid his or her transition to maturity to be an effective initiator of youth.
6. It must happen in the home community	Children grow up, by and large, in communities that are defined by geographic boundaries and real live interpersonal interactions. Connection to an actual geographic place, especially when there is deep contact with nature and a psychological sense of community is critical to a sense of self and security for children. Effective rites of passage establish a safe place for intentional conversations to occur between citizens of the community, i.e. youth and adults.
7. Rites of passage create expectations for socially appropriate behaviors	Coming of age in a rites of passage experience involves creating and supporting intentional environments that transmit essential values and ethics that guide and inform expectations for socially appropriate behaviors.
8. Rituals	Ritual, as part of a Rites of Passage Experience can set a more powerful context and impact the atmosphere for interactions where learning can emerge and become embedded deeply within individuals.
9. Adversity introduces us to ourselves	Experiences that challenge the individual emotionally and/or physically present opportunities to learn values and/or skills that increase self-awareness and greater ability to be in healthful connection.
10. Silence	Children and youth grow up in a cacophony of sound that makes the "call to adventure," the internal alarm clock awakening them to the coming of age process almost inaudible. Silence helps a young person develop an internal dialogue for narrating and making sense of what is going on around them.
11. Connection with nature	Experiences that help individuals realize and appreciate their connection and interdependence to the natural environment.
12. Time alone for reflection	Contemplation helps foster balance in our connections and relationships. Time intentionally set aside for a person to reflect on his/her personal values, actions and beliefs.
13. Connection with ancestral roots	The opportunity to learn, value and appreciate one's connection to those who went before and the values and ethics their heritage embraces.
14. Play	The opportunity to help individuals find their "bliss," those activities that they can immerse themselves in with great passion, and from which they receive unbridled joy. Play is secular spirituality and a primal, organic way for essential learning, laughter, love & sense of community.
15. Non-ordinary states of reality	Experimenting with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are contemporary pattern attempting to satisfy primal curiosity. The use of sanctioned behaviors such as vision quest, meditation, yoga, movement and dance, play in 'in the zone' with sports and hobbies to experience non-ordinary states of reality.

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16. Giving away one's previous attitudes, behaviors, etc.	The coming of age process through rites of passage includes the giving up or giving away of some aspect, e.g., behavior, attitude, cherished item, that characterized their former status. This process conveys a reality that change – leaving something dear in the past behind – is an integral part of the transition
17. Obligation of service to the larger community	Through a community-based rite of passage expectations for service are “institutionalized” as a central value. Adolescents are oriented to recognize that service to the community is an essential part of becoming a fully functioning adult in society.
18. Changes of appearance that express/reflect new status	As recognition of their transition to a new status, initiates may adorn themselves with some external symbol that signifies this attainment. This might include special cloths, adornments, and badges etc. that are awarded during public rites of passage.
19. Demonstrate new competencies & change status	Opportunities in one's family, School, with peers and in Community to demonstrate newly acquired skills and competencies and public affirmation of the initiates new status.
20. Celebration & affirmation of status change	Community celebrations in which the new status of initiates is recognized and acclaimed.

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