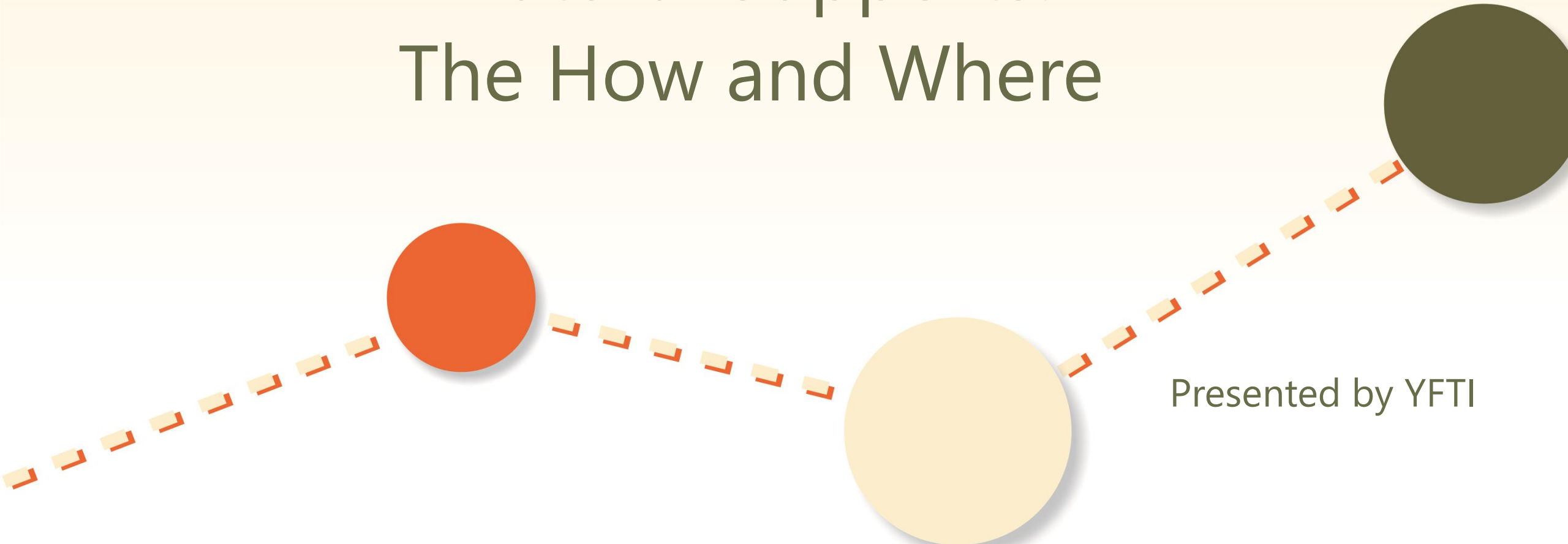


Natural Supports: The How and Where



Presented by YFTI

Learning Objectives

Where to find Natural Supports

Getting Natural Supports onto Teams

Using Natural Supports Effectively

Keeping Natural Supports Engaged on the Team

What are Natural Supports?



Natural supports are ***personal associations, relationships, and activities*** independent from formal services, typically developed in the community that *enhance the quality and security of life for the family and youth.*

What are Natural Supports?

Natural Supports:

Reflective of the diversity of the neighborhood & the community

Are sustainable

Reduce stigma

Are already available

Are fiscally responsible

The Importance of Natural Supports for Youth

- When youth have positive relationships with peers, neighbors (youth and adult), co-workers, other students, relatives, etc., their sense of acceptance and stability is increased.
- Youth who have worked to either establish a relationship or have learned how to reciprocate with others have a **skill** that can be strengthened and enhanced.



How are Natural Supports Helpful in Your Life?



- Acceptance
- Encouragement
- Support
- Laughter
- Shared experiences
- Protection
- Safety
- Connection
- Hope

Recruiting Natural Supports

We typically think of natural supports as:

- Friends
- Family members

These are great *'Inside the Box'* options for identifying natural supports. This training can take your thinking to the next level... *'Outside the Box'*!



Thinking Outside the Box

Taking care of oneself is a form of support.

- What helps the youth/family relax?
- Where do the youth/family find comfort and safety?
 - Do the youth/family have positive relationships with anyone with similar interests?
 - Books (clubs), television, walking, exercise, yoga, music, etc. These are all resources for finding natural supports when you look outside the box.

What does the youth/family do for fun?

- Go where they are.
 - Video games, along with Facebook, and any other group-oriented online/positive gaming activity can be a source of support for the youth/family.

Things to consider:

- What does the youth gain out of it?
- Is the activity appropriate?



Cultural and Linguistic Considerations

- Compatibility needs to be explored regarding culture/lifestyles, religion, nationalities, language, etc.
- Natural supports should be non-judgmental.
- People with similar backgrounds may work more effectively together.
- A youth/family may not want a member of their place of worship or another person of the same religion/culture to be natural support.
- It's always important to explore the need and ensure that there is comfort and compatibility.

Where to find them

Brainstorming !!!



Recruiting Natural Supports

- Develop a continuum of community resources
- Some may be time-limited and others sustainable over the long haul
- Big Brothers or Sisters
- Family support groups
- Clubhouses for adults
- Volunteers from civic organizations
- Local businesses, sports programs, etc.

Joining the Team

Although there should be a natural support at every meeting, it does not need to be the same person at every meeting.

Things to consider:

- Different people have different strengths and may be suited to help with different needs.
 - Who is the family comfortable sharing information with related to specific need areas?
 - Natural supports don't need to know everything that is going on in the family's life.
- How can the support help?
- What's in it for that person to participate? What benefits might they get from being on the team?

Natural Supports in Plans



- **What is the most surprising natural support that you have ever used in your planning with a youth & family?**
- **Do you think they stayed connected with this resource after the process ended? If so, why or why not?**

Using and Keeping the 3 P's



- **Purpose**

- Team members want to feel there is a reason for their involvement

- **Progress**

- Team members want to feel like they are helping
- No one wants to be part of a stagnant team

- **Passion**

- Having a vested interest in the youth and family will help team members feel connected and stay on the team



Questions? Thoughts?

Thank You For Your Time

