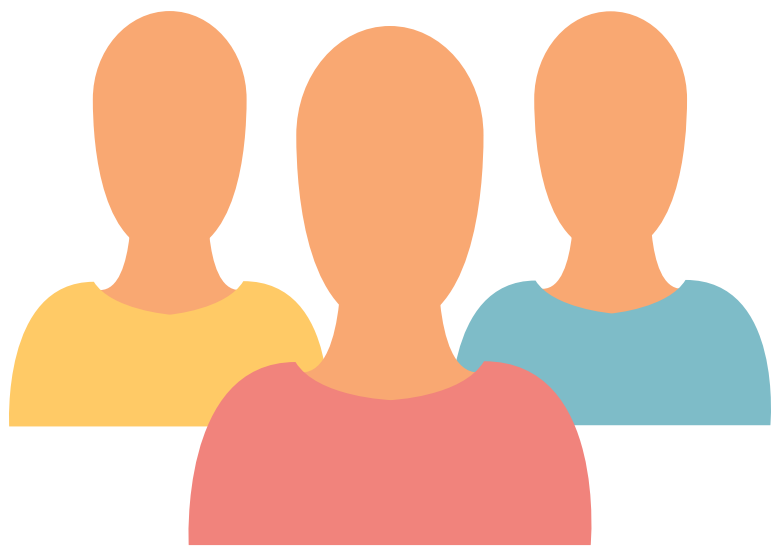


# 2018 Turn It Around Focus Group Themes

November 2018

## Youth feel connected to community, coalition staff, and peers.



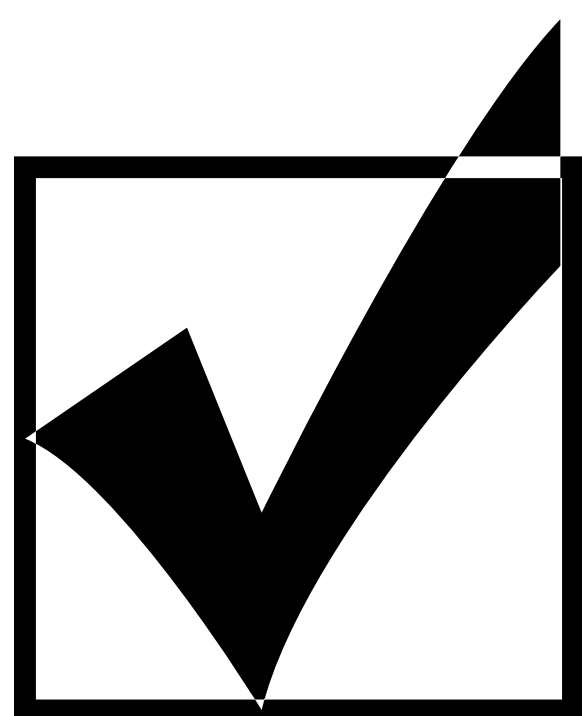
Youth stated they joined Turn It Around because their friends were members, their peers who were members talked about their experiences, and/or because of close relationships between staff and their family. Aside from earning money as a member of the group, youth mentioned they remain a part of Turn It Around because they feel they are making a positive difference in their community and they are gaining leadership skills to improve the community. In addition, participants said they enjoy different opportunities to bring the community together through BBQs and the Peace Park, and that they are becoming well-known in the community and recognized for their work; one participant said he or she had been recognized by newspapers. Youth mentioned that all the staff members motivate them to keep coming to the group. Focus group participants also mentioned they enjoy having conversations with fellow members of the group about anything, and the opportunity to “Build relationships by seeing the same people all the time”. Lastly, youth mentioned that they have learned a lot about drug overdoses in Charlestown, which seemed to be an eye-opening experience, as one participant stated “We have the most” when another participant mentioned learning about substance use in the community. This newfound knowledge seemed to create more of an awareness and empathetic connection to the community, as well as highlight the importance of making a positive impact in Charlestown.

## Youth feel welcomed and accepted in Turn It Around.



In conjunction with the above theme of feeling connected, all youth participants stated they feel welcomed because they are all very close and know each other. They also stated that all youth are allowed in the group and there are no requirements or discrimination, which heightens the sense of acceptance.

## Participating in Turn It Around has made a positive impact on the youth's lives.



Participants stated that they have had the opportunity to access resources because of Turn It Around; staff have provided support to help improve their lives, such as helping youth get a Massachusetts ID, court system support, summer jobs, and becoming sober. Youth also mentioned that they find one of the biggest differences between Turn It Around and other youth groups is the support system they have in the program staff, which remains a strength of the program as this is consistent with the focus groups themes from last year. In addition, youth mentioned another key difference between Turn It Around and other youth groups is that staff provide “actual help with life”, especially any personal matters; they stated that they know staff will always be there to help them. Finally, youth stated that their decision-making process would not be the same if they were not members of the group; one participant stated he or she would take the same actions but they would be more negative if he or she was not a member of the group. All participants agreed that they make more positive decisions because of their participation in Turn It Around.

## Youth suggest changing the content/structure of the meetings to maximize engagement.

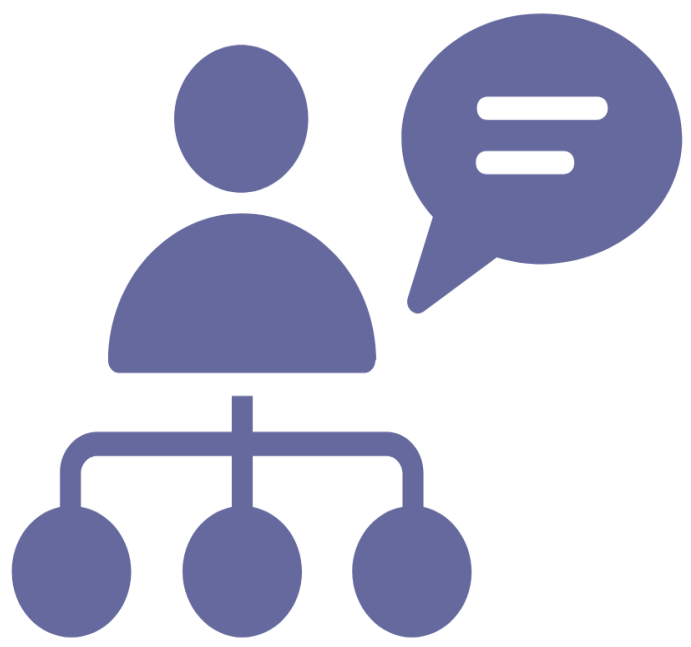
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Participants would like the group to meet for a longer amount of time, at least two hours; one participant suggested meeting from 4pm-6pm. Youth also stated they would like to have more hands-on workshops and activities because, “We do a lot of planning, sitting, and talking”. Youth also said they would like to have more opportunities to get out into the community through events. In addition, youth suggested having more educational and fun field trips, as well as more opportunities to bond with each other.

# 2018 Turn It Around Focus Group Themes

November 2018

## Youth are gaining valuable social and life skills.



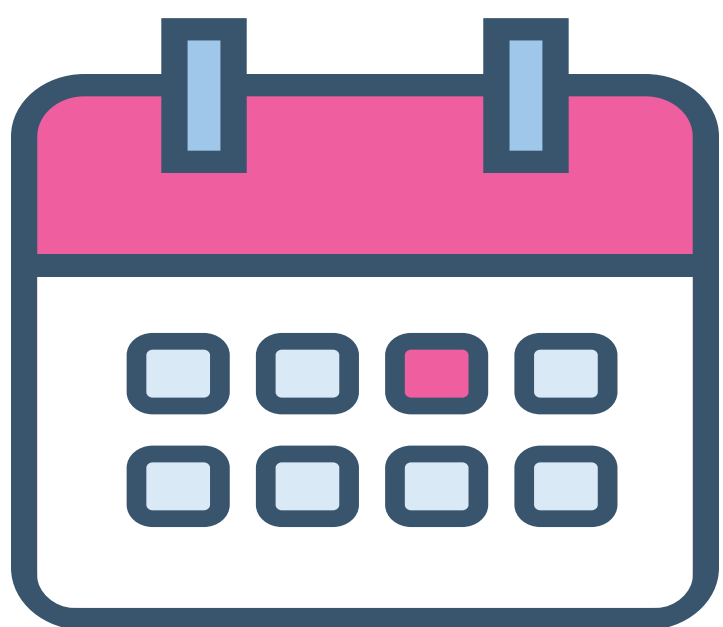
During the focus group, participants stated they have learned leadership and public speaking skills that can be applied to other settings, as well as responsibility, empathy, confidence, and how to generally live a good life. A few participants agreed that they felt more confident because of the group. Participants also mentioned they have learned life lessons because of Turn It Around.

## Youth have enjoyed and used a couple of the activities done in Turn It Around.



Participants in the focus group said they enjoyed the Peace Project, Act of Kindness, and Advice to Your Middle School Self—one participant said he actually used the advice in school when it came to respecting teachers, etc.

## Participants enjoy the monthly themes and would like to have more of a say in choosing them.



Youth stated they like the monthly themes discussed thus far, and they would like to explore a voting/suggestion system to choose which topics they discussed. Some ideas for the types of theme to explore include civics, politics, different cultures, the court system (specifically unfair trials and how juries are picked), and the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.

## Youth would like to see Turn It Around grow and expand in the future.



Participants said they would like to see more youth join the group, especially more diverse youth, and would like the group to become widespread, potentially through advocacy and advertising (having their own website, etc.); participants stated they would like more people to know about the group, and would like to eventually see a Turn It Around group in every community of Boston. A version of this theme was mentioned last year as well, as one young person mentioned expanding Turn It Around to Boys & Girls Clubs across Boston. One participant also stated, “We need our own building”.

## Participants stated typical life stressors and indicated that stress management is not impacted by participation in Turn It Around.



When asked about stressors, youth mentioned factors such as school/college, life in general, work, lack of sleep, being a teenager, and entering the real world. When asked how they manage stress, many typical answers were stated, such as listening to music, eating, and sleeping/laying down. There was no mention of how the group has led to different techniques in stress relief or management, and youth seemed to be split on whether or not their stress management methods are similar or different than their peers outside of the group; a few participants said no while some said yes. The Charlestown Coalition strives to further educate youth on positive stress management techniques, so it will be great to see the growth among youth in this area as they continue to participate in the Turn It Around group.