



RADICAL VISIONS OF SAFETY: A BRIEF SUMMARY

PREPARED FOR ALLIANCE FOR GIRLS
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art by mensen. [///www.mensenxoxo.com](http://www.mensenxoxo.com)



authored by:  evaluation studio

RADICAL VISIONS OF SAFETY: A BRIEF SUMMARY

This Radical Visions of Safety Brief is created to provide an overview of the full Radical Visions of Safety Report released in 2021, and include specific, actionable strategies for those doing this work. This brief should be used and shared:

1. To gain insight into the basic conditions and practices girls say they need in order to feel safe;
2. To design and implement programming and policy changes to foster radical safety;
3. To advocate and hold systems and institutions accountable to meeting safety for girls;
4. To understand and value a better approach towards co-creating with girls.

Radical Visions of Safety (RVoS) was first commissioned by Alliance for Girls back in 2019 as an extension of their Meeting Girls' Needs Initiative to gain deeper insight into the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) from the lived, intersectional experiences of girls and gender-expansive youth most impacted by GBV. The approach this report took started from a space wherein girls redefined and recentered language and concepts of safety and healthy relationship, and then identified how they wanted to live, feel, and thrive to support this new understanding.

RADICAL, INNOVATIVE, AND MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

The Radical Visions of Safety report is an innovative step in reinvigorating social justice and community-based work for girls and their champions. It has also shifted the direction of power towards those most underrepresented, and shifted the burden of resilience towards biased systems and institutions. Lastly, RVoS addresses many of the approaches the CDC notes as imperative for a “cross-cutting approach” towards thoughtfully addressing multiple forms of violence. RVoS strategically focuses on development periods for girls, their multigenerational relationships, cuts across silos, fosters collaboration and partnerships to extend and expand this work, and is developing tools, resources, and the data systems to support it. From the larger report we learned:

- Girls’ radical visions of safety are dynamic and evolving. The way girls characterize safety moves away from traditional assumptions and encompasses notions of physical, emotional and spiritual ideas of comfort, non-judgment, acceptance, and belonging.
- Multigenerational practices are impactful in fostering safe spaces and healthy relationships for girls. Supportive connections with adults, parents, and caregivers contribute profoundly to their well-being.
- Social media and digital literacy are important pathways for girls. Fostering more understanding and training for both girls and adults can leverage these pathways’ potential for positive impact and mitigate their negative effects.
- Girls need more integrated systems of support in order to receive a continuity of care that see them as whole beings wherein the physical body, and emotional and spiritual self are interconnected and cared for as such.

GIRLS' DEFINITIONS OF SAFETY AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

According to 89 girls (ages 11-24) and their champions who cut across varying intersectional racial, sexual, gender, and socioeconomic identities, the following concepts and their particular characterizations are imperative to feeling safe and nurturing healthy relationships.

These concepts were the frequently most used across all identities and groups. However, it is important to note that specific identity groups highlighted and prioritized certain notions over others as being more central to their needs around safety and healthy relationships. For LGBTQIA+ folx, they further prioritized acknowledgment and belonging over trust and comfort. While, young parents more frequently mention needing connection and support around basic needs over non-judgment and acceptance in order to feel safe.



HOW GIRLS DEFINE SAFETY & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

TRUST

Confidentiality and protection of vulnerability built between peers and adults

NON-JUDGMENT

Open-mindedness and freedom to express authentic self with unconditional acceptance and without feeling judged.

COMFORT

Being at ease, carefree, and without stress.

BOUNDARIES

Awareness and regard of what one is willing to give, what one is willing to accept, and what one is needing.

RESPECT

Emotionally and physically meeting one where they are by valuing their opinions and not making demands to change.

FUN

Experiences marked by laughter, happiness, and humor.

SELF-LOVE

Cultivating a relationship with oneself through self-awareness, self-expression, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

REPRESENTATION

Leaders, role models, and trusted adults who reflect participants' histories, ethnicities, social identities, and culture.

SOVEREIGNTY

Sense of control and determination around one's body and environment, allowing freedom from self-consciousness and stigma.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

People and spaces equipped with the recognition and acceptance for one's many ways of being and identities.

BELONGING

Feeling welcome physically, emotionally, and spiritually into a community and space.

CONNECTION

Interacting, finding commonality, bridging experiences and receiving support with others of similar circumstances.

BASIC NEEDS

Receiving support around fundamental necessities including food, housing, supplies, and childcare.

PROMISING PRACTICES: A CALL TO ACTION

How can organizations, institutions, funders, policymakers, and communities invest in and create spaces to foster safety? How can we make this knowledge actionable?

This section outlines specific promising practices and strategies as voiced by girls and their champions as a path forward towards achieving this radical vision. This section can also serve as a cheatsheet for people and organizations to guide actionable strategies.



Communities,
Organizations, and
Programs



Schools and Public
Spaces (*i.e. Libraries,
Parks and Rec*)



Policymakers, Advocacy
Organizations, and
Governments



Funders and
Grantmakers

Awareness & Knowledge on issues relevant to girls' intersectional identities



Facilitating heightened consciousness and understanding of issues particular to girls. Knowledge is seen as power, and participants recognize the role knowledge has in increasing agency for girls.

- Integrate trainings, curriculum, and workshops on cultural humility, critical histories and inclusive identities
- Create policies and public resources inclusive of critical histories and inclusive identities as it relates to gender identity and safety for girls.
- Increase access to information and resources regarding gender-based violence, gender-based health, cultural humility, and critical histories



- Host workshops on consent and healthy relationships for young people
- Host multi-generational workshops

Bodies, Boundaries, & Consent in relationships with self and others

The term 'boundaries' is discussed earlier in this report as the most frequently mentioned prerequisite for a positive, nurturing, and healthy relationship. Consent is a specific and particularly important type of boundary. It is an explicit, positive, and clear communication around the affirmation of and agreement upon sexual and physical activity.

Digital Literacy with a focus on safety



Expanding digital literacy for girls in order to teach them how to manage their reputations and recognize abusive behaviors. By deconstructing the messages that girls are receiving through social media, organizations find they are able to strengthen girls' self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management.

- Include social media and digital literacy resources and knowledge across community and programming spaces.
- Mandate a standard social media and digital literacy curriculum and workshops in schools.
- Demystify social media



Adult Support as it relates to social emotional well being

- Use words and demonstrate actions of encouragement, affirmation, and belief
- Participate in active listening
- Create space for intentional and continuous check-ins and circles to give space to share and listen to girls.

Adult support scaffolds important connections and relationships for girls to achieve radical spaces of safety and healthy relationships. Social and emotional guidance by adults includes encouragement, listening, and holding physical and emotional space.

Modeling healthy & safe relationships and space

Replicating and demonstrating examples of safe and healthy physical spaces, behaviors and relationships. Space is intentionally designed so that girls can understand what a safe space and healthy environment feels like, and having seen it, can come to expect and ask for that in their lives where it may not have been present before.



- Create clean, accessible, and welcoming spaces, which can accommodate a wide range of inclusive identities.
- Facilitate connections to mentors and role models



Cultural Humility that embodies an affirming culture of care

- Increase staff diversity and representation of the communities being served
- Integrate staff development trainings and workshops on cultural humility, critical histories and inclusive identities

Practice of mutuality and kinship through acceptance, representation and grounded empathy of shared culture, values, beliefs, and identities. It is a competence and standard that puts the onus of learning and critique on the adults working with girls.

Youth Leadership in all spaces where decisions are made

Youth-led practices encourage resistance, political awareness, policy reform, and public speaking around issues affecting girls' radical visions of safety and healthy relationships. Some examples include youth engagement and youth organizing in town halls, summits, advocacy, campaigns, and movements.



- Increase access and opportunity for youth to lead across community, programming, and schools
- Increase capacity building to support youth leadership
- Involve girls and girl-serving organizations in decisions about funding priorities, strategy, outcomes, and gaps.
- Open up evaluation and outcome measures to be led by girls' voices and lived experiences.
- Shift the narrative of safety to reflect lived, intersectional experiences by inviting girls and their champions to policy convenings, legislative briefings, and intentional policy language
- Integrate youth participatory action research practices
- Develop youth advisory councils and youth peer education exchanges



- Collaborate with communities, and organizations to de-silo services and create a network of care
- Provide more flexible and unrestricted funding for organizations serving girls.
- Correct gender biased policies which shift the burden of resilience from girls to systems and institutions.
- Working with girls and girls champions to repair policy harms and compensating them for their support and lived expertise.

Accountability and Iteration of practices serving girls' whole selves

Creating accountable and flexible policies, practices, and strategies which care for girls' whole mental, spiritual, and physical selves.

Meaningful Parent Engagement in Girls' Lives

Parent/caregiver engagement is characterized as first creating dialogue between parents and girls; and secondly as extending the practices, awareness, knowledge, and resources provided to girls to their parents. Creating the skills and tools to support parents to actively listen, engage, and express themselves to their kids.



- Support and provide parent/caregiver engagement through workshops and resources
- Remove barriers to accessing childcare for all parents
- Improve parent and family leave policies and ensure they are inclusive of parents of all gender identities.
- Fund intergenerational (i.e. parents/caregivers, adults) learning and service delivery to recognize the family and community context in which girls are served, and redistribute the burden of change and healing for girls.
- Increase capacity building to support parent engagement



Supporting **Self-Actualization** practices

- Incorporate social and emotional and trauma-informed training and workshops for adults and staff across community and programming spaces.
- Expand publicly-funded, free/subsidized gender-responsive mental health services. Girls and their champions describe an “overload of stressors” that are competing for their attention. Access to mental health services is a desire for organizations to have in order to fully support girls.
- Supporting mindfulness practices
- Hosting workshops and curriculum that support self-awareness

Self-Actualization encompasses concepts of self-awareness and self-regulation, and the ability to understand and control one’s reactions and emotions. When one can be self-aware of who they are, and have the capacity to emotionally self-regulate, one is able to make better decisions and choices

Support for Young Parents that is stigma free



Young parents need comprehensive assistance threading basic needs, child care, welfare services, mental health, etc. They also need support as young people who are developing, but also as parents who need caregiver skills.

- Create multi-use spaces (e.g. childcare and job resources)
- Increase access to information and resources regarding basic needs, social benefits, and supportive programs
- Use words and demonstrate actions of encouragement and belief to help break the stigma young moms face
- Support case management
- Participate in active listening
- Schedule regular and intentional check-ins
- Provide access to free or subsidized child care
- Provide accessible, safe, free and subsidized transportation for girls. Transportation is one of the largest barriers to accessing programming and community support.