

## Philosophy of CYC Practice

Since I was little, I always knew I wanted to work with children. As I got older, I found it was easier for me to make connections with children and youth. This comes from my many years as a competitive dancer, dance teacher and nanny. I use to find myself spending hours with the younger kids at the studio instead of teenagers. I made genuine relationships with the 'littles' as I called them. Whenever they needed anything, they would come to me, I was like an older sister. Kids have a contagious energy that inspired me to keep going.

I want to become a CYC because I want to become the person I never had as a kid. I was always nervous to speak up about what I was feeling because I didn't think it was okay for me to feel sad. "Surely kids are living in worst conditions than me, how can I be sad when I still live at home with both my parents?" This is what I use to think about all the time, sometimes it would keep me up at night. Not all youth we work with will come from troubled homes nor will they all be from stable households. You can never assume one child's experience is the same as the next. I believe in finding the good in everyone. There is no such thing as a 'bad kid,' there are only bad choices. Every kid deserves a chance at happiness and to receive the same level of trust and respect as someone else. I believe in working with children, youth and their families in their everyday lives, not in an office. A youth's milieu can tell you a lot about what's going on around them while an office is a controlled environment, with little to no room for surprises.

My experience as a nanny was a turning point for me. It showed me how much I care for the positive development of youth and being a part of their everyday life. This is important because it gave me the perspective I needed to truly understand what they may have been thinking and feeling every day. I'd support them through moments of crisis and encourage them to overcome obstacles which improved their problem-solving skills. I got to watch these kids grow up during COVID-19 when everything was locked down. This was the time when they needed someone by their side to comfort them. Their parents are healthcare professionals and had to face the virus head-on, so I stayed at home with the kids to keep them company.

One major thing I've learned since becoming a CYC is to never assume you know what's going on. No two kids are the same. This profession doesn't come with a "how-to" guide to

working with every kid. Your best hope is to listen to the child and have them explain what they're going through because only then will you be able to help them succeed.

Every day I find a new reason to become a CYC. Sometimes it's a wave from a kid on the street or an article about kids online. I hope to make a difference in one child's life, whether that's an immediate change or it's seen in 5 years. I want children to see their growth and to understand their value in this world. By having at least one strong connection with another person, they can build roads to success they may have never thought of.

It was my dance team that showed me how much I value those relationships with youth and the love I feel when I see them achieve their goals. I got to watch the 'littles' grow into smart and talented young girls, who look to me as their role model. The kids I used to nanny for, showed me how impactful I could be in a child's development. They just wanted a hand to hold when they were scared and someone on the sidelines cheering them on every step of the way. Not only do I strive to help build children's self-confidence but I see an improvement in my own. My younger self would be very proud of the woman I'm becoming and the future CYC I plan to be. I impress myself every day with how far I've come; from a scared little girl who couldn't speak up to a future CYC who's passionate about giving those kids their voice. I believe every kid deserves to have their voice heard and I plan to help them do just that!

The CYC program at Loyalist College in Belleville has taught me a lot about my values and beliefs and how I can use them in this profession. I've learnt the importance of listening and getting to know the children we work with, building a genuine connection and how to use my values/beliefs while working with kids without influencing the relationship. I'm so glad I decided to become a CYC because the experience I'm getting with the lessons and skills I've earned will help me in my future profession.