



WHAT DOES ENGAGEMENT MEAN?

Fun changes young people's lives. We know that fun environments can help young people experience transformation, but fun isn't just entertainment or games. Fun can be best understood as engagement, which is when young people are connected and participating with the people and activities around them. Here is a list of things that young people will be thinking, feeling, and experiencing when they are engaged...

Curious: There's things going on, I want to know what happens next. I've been given a taste, and I'm intrigued.

Participating: I'm actively involved, I'm part of the action - and I want to be! My thoughts and opinions matter and are asked for. I'm not being asked to do things I'm not interested in doing.

Relevant: What is happening matters to me; it's clear how it applies to my life. I know what the stakes are - I'm invested. It comes from the real world, using the language, ideas and experience of the audience.

Fun & funny: I'm having a great time, enjoying myself, laughing. My endorphins are flowing.

Interpersonal: I'm with people I like, having experiences together, making memories. I feel like I belong.

Learning: I'm learning new information or a skill that I'm interested in. Even better if I can investigate and discover for myself... I'll learn best if I can experience something, reflect on it, analyse it then apply it.

Memorable: It's extraordinary, rare, new, novel unique, unusual (in a good way)! I almost never see or do things like this, so I'll remember it for a long time.

Story: You're telling me a story that I know how to follow. I'm on a journey with you - maybe even literally! The story could be light or deep, about you or me, but there's a universal application.

Sensory: All my senses are engaged - it's more than just listening; I'm looking at things, feeling things, tasting, smelling. Things are aesthetically pleasing.

Challenge & competition: You have something I want - whether it's a prize or solution, or I'm competing, you've got a captured audience (be careful with this though). I have to wrestle with what you're saying; I might even disagree with you!

Encouraging and motivating: I'm enthused, inspired and intrigued by what's happening - I want to go out and make something happen!

Involves "safe" risk: I'm asked to step out and do something different. I'm challenged. But I'm not made to feel uncomfortable or forced.

Temperaments: It's not a one size fits all approach, there's something for everyone. The thinkers get epiphanies, the feelers are emotionally moved, the doers are inspired and given a road-map to act.

Achievement: I'm doing something that matters, that I'll feel good about when we've finished. We're doing it together. I'll show and tell others what we've done.

Fun changes lives, but fun is engagement. Next time you're thinking about creating a fun environment for young people, don't just go to the usual games, but also consider how you could best help create the experiences listed above.