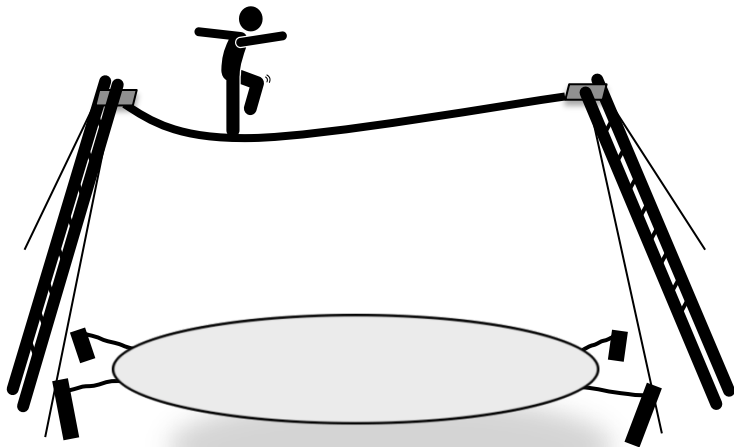


# **Assessment mapping with the tight rope<sup>®</sup>**

A tool to support young people to recognise their strengths, risks and needs

## **Version 3.2**

Inform guidance aligned with the AssetPlus Framework, Good Lives Model, Signs of Safety<sup>®</sup> and Desistance Theories



*The tight rope<sup>®</sup> is an analogy-based tool designed to assist practitioners working with children, young people and families to engage them in thinking about past harm, current strengths and supports, risks or dangers and the steps needed to achieve future goals.*

Original Tightrope © Dr Roberta Evans 2006 - 2014

Version 2 – aligned with Signs of Safety<sup>®</sup> wording © Dr Roberta Evans and Louise Jones 2014

Version 3 – aligned with YJB AssetPlus framework, Good Lives Model, Motivational Interviewing and Signs of Safety<sup>®</sup> © Vlinder Consultancy Ltd

Practitioner Resilience version – for managers to support professionals working with vulnerable clients © Dr Roberta Evans and Richard Swann 2015

Produced by: Vlinder Consultancy Ltd ([www.vlinder.co.uk](http://www.vlinder.co.uk))

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**Use of the materials:** these are designed as a tool for engaging young people in an open and positive discussion about their assessment and/or plans and should only be used by practitioners who are experienced and qualified to undertake assessments and feel confident to discuss these with young people. The authors and publisher cannot accept responsibility for how the tool is used and expressly disclaim liability for the tool's application in practice. The responsibility for the application of this tool lies with the individual practitioner, who should ensure they have access to appropriate on-going support for themselves and their clients. Training and consultancy is available on request.

**Avoid bombarding the young person with questions** – please take your time to map things out and select just a couple of questions from sections.

For more information about other versions, training and access to the toolkit and guidance supporting this tool please email: [roberta@vlinder.co.uk](mailto:roberta@vlinder.co.uk)

Falling off -  
Worrying  
behaviour / dangers



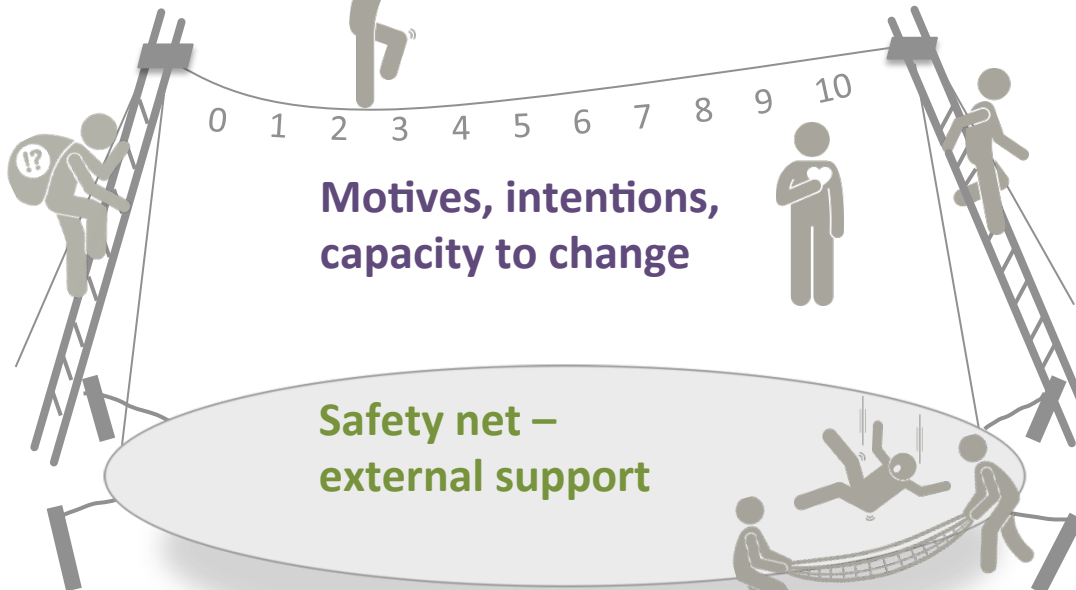
Balancing  
– Internal strengths



Forecasting -  
Contingency  
planning



Steps up -  
Current  
worries  
making  
Tightrope  
higher



Steps planned /  
actions needed

Motives, intentions,  
capacity to change



Safety net –  
external support

What can others do  
to support the plan?

Past worries  
making path  
muddy



Foundations for change /  
past success



Goals –  
What does safe  
ground look like?



## INTRODUCTION:

Approaching adolescence can be a time of imbalance, taking risks, becoming independent and growing into adulthood. It can be a time of testing limits, experimenting with new things, working out friendships as well as making the most of opportunities, building an identity, having fun and learning.

Sometimes young people get involved in unsafe behaviour – including the misuse of drugs or alcohol, breaking the law, harming themselves or others. This can be for many different reasons. Most young people grow out of the behaviour and will have strengths within them or people around them that help them stay safe, avoid getting into trouble and move on to achieve.

This tool is designed to help us talk about all of these things and map out what we are worried about, what is going well and what needs to happen by using an analogy of adolescence and ‘youth risk’ like someone balancing on a tightrope.

- Each person will have skills and attributes to help them grow up well. These are the internal strengths to ‘walk the rope’ and ‘stay balanced’.
- There may be a number of steps up to the tightrope that represent the things we’re worried about and lets us know how high (or dangerous) things are.
- Having a strong safety net (that is not too tight or too loose) will be protective during this time and make it easier to be supported to take the steps needed.
- When thinking about how high the tightrope is it’s important to think about what might happen – what might ‘falling off’ look like.
- Sometimes a past ‘muddy path’ or uneven ground can make things more wobbly
- A strong foundation of positive experiences can help make things more stable
- For young people, being on the tightrope can mean different things, it can be exciting, scary, fun and risky, but it’s not safe to stay up too high for too long. It’s important to have an idea of what ‘safe ground’ looks like.
- Thinking about the steps needed to get to safe ground will be important.
- In order to take the steps to be back down on ‘safe ground’ think about what motivates us to do this – and this will be different for different people.

**You are invited to use one of the attached templates to discuss and map these areas**

## PLEASE READ:

The **tight rope**<sup>®</sup> is an analogy-based assessment aid. The one-page form is to help discuss and map out all the areas involved in assessing strengths, risks and needs (internal and external, past and current) for an individual and/or family to move forward toward positive change.

There are two blank templates available – the choice of use depending on practitioner preference. Included in this pack is evidence of how the analogy aligns with current frameworks and an inform guidance with questions to support a guided discussion around the analogy. The inform guidance has been adapted to incorporate wording from AssetPlus, Good Lives Model, Motivational Interviewing and Signs of Safety<sup>®</sup> as an aid for practitioners engaging young people in assessments and plans.

Practitioners using this template are asked to do so only if they are confident and skilled in undertaking assessments and engaging young people (and parents/carers) in discussions about risk and resilience. It is particularly helpful to those trained in Motivational Interviewing and Brief Solution Focused techniques. The guidance offers examples of questions from various frameworks – please choose only a few to use. In any case, practitioners need to work **with** the young person to identify their strengths and needs – and ensure the young person knows what support is available and **how** to access this. Practitioners also need to ensure they have resilience and support in their practice.

A toolkit is available for professionals working with young people involved in offending, substance misuse, self harm or sexually harmful behaviour. This includes 8 sets of prompt cards with plain statements linked to each area of assessment and planning that are produced from relevant research and guidance. It is supported by an 84page manual that provides references for each prompt. A pack is also available for managers supporting resilience in practitioners in vulnerable professions.

For more information about these packs or training or to send feedback please contact: [roberta@vlinder.co.uk](mailto:roberta@vlinder.co.uk)

### Worries?

What might 'falling off' look like?



### Working well?

Strengths to stay balanced?

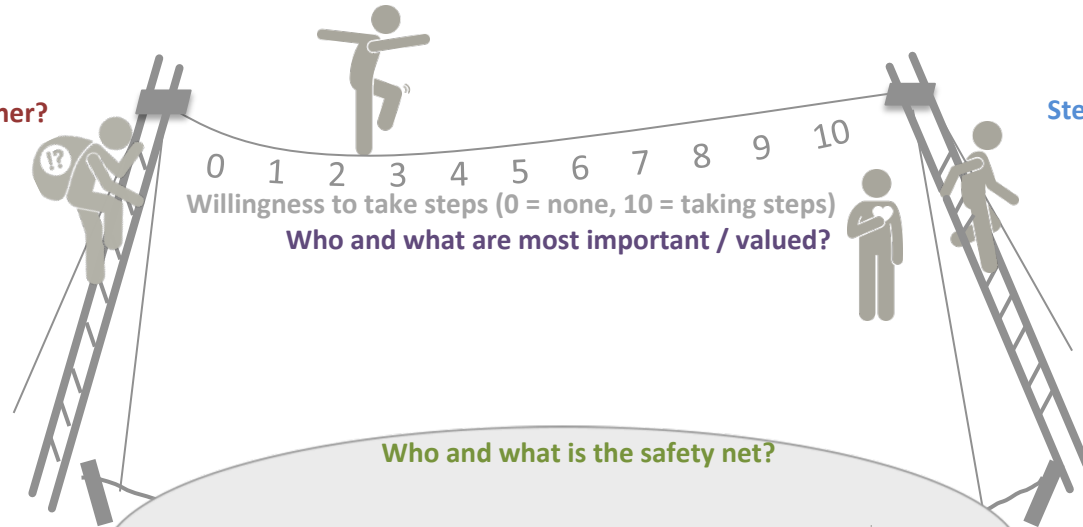
### Needs to happen?

Contingency planning



Current worries making Tightrope higher?

Steps planned / need to take



Past worries making path muddy?



Foundations for change / past success

What can others do to support plan?

What does safe ground look like?



## Worries?

### What might 'falling off' look like?

What has happened that we are worried will happen again, that might hurt you or others? Do you mind if we talk about [insert behaviour]? What do you worry you might do again? If things keep going the way they are, what's the worst that might happen?



### Current worries making Tightrope higher?

Are their things happening in your life or in your family that make this problem harder to deal with? What is that like for you? Are there situations or people that makes things more 'worrying' or 'risky'? What makes it difficult to take positive steps? Might these be things that make the Tightrope higher? How high is the Tightrope?



### Past worries making path muddy?

What has happened, what have you seen, that makes you / others worried?



Can you say when this first began? What are others concerned about? Let's try to identify problems that are no longer present and now in the past.

## Working well?

### Strengths to stay balanced?

What's the best way you cope with stress / worries / change? What are your best attributes? This is what I like about you .... what would [important person] say they like about you?



How important is it to take steps?  
How confident are you to do this?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Willingness to take steps (0 = none, 10 = taking steps)  
What number best reflects how ready you are?

### Who and what are most important / valued?

What are the best things about your life? Who / what would you say are most important to you? What have you gained from [problem / behaviour]? What motivates you?

### Who and what is the safety net?

Who do you call on for help?

Who are the people that care most about you?  
What are the best things about how they care?

Who is there for you no matter what?

Who helps you learn and grow?

Who looks out for you?

### Foundations for change / past success

Are there times when the 'falling off' behaviour could have happened but you or others stopped it happening? Have there been times when problems has been dealt with well or were even a little better? How did that happen? What are you most proud of? What are your best memories?



## Needs to happen?

### Contingency planning

What might be in the future that we need to think about, plan for or be aware of?  
What needs to happen if things get worse (or better)?



### Steps planned / need to take

What is the smallest next step you could take toward your goals? What do you think are other steps that should happen to get this worry sorted out? What would need to happen for the scale to move just 0.1 point up from [number chosen on scale]

### What can others do to support plan?

How can I help you get past some of the difficulties you are experiencing? What do others need to do to support the plan?

### What does safe ground look like?

What would you or others need to see that would mean the problem is sorted? What would '10' look like? If you make changes, how would your life be different from what it is today? What would a 'good life' look like?



Where on the path are we when it comes to how safe or stable the situation is now? Are there different judgements for different people?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Scale of safety/stability (0 = still in place of worries, 10 = on safe and stable ground)

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Wording adapted from Ward & Maruna (2007), Signs of Safety (Turnell, 2012), AssetPlus (YJB, 2013) and Miller and Rollnick (2013)



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Worries?**

**Falling off**

- Explore presenting problems (GLM)
- Predict future harmful behaviors and adverse outcomes (YJB)
- Create danger statement (SOS)
- Identify what needs to change (MI)



**Steps up**

- Consider negative environment – (GLM)
- Factors against desistance (YJB)
- Complicating factors (SOS)
- Sustain talk against change (MI)



**Muddy path**

- Explore criminogenic needs (GLM)
- Significant life events / past harm (YJB)
- Consider past harm (SOS)
- Why is change important? (MI)

**Working well?**

**Balancing**

- Internal strengths and expertise (GLM)
- Coping strategies supporting desistance (YJB)
- Positive attributes / what is liked about them? (SOS)
- Belief that change is possible (MI)



Willingness to take steps (0 = none, 10 = taking steps)

**Motives / Values**

- Function of offending (goods) (GLM)
- Values, beliefs & motives (YJB)
- What and who most important to them (SOS)
- What supports change? (MI)

**Safety net**

- Consider positive environment (GLM)
- External protective factors for desistance (YJB)
- Who are the people that care most (SOS)
- Who might support change? (MI)



**Foundations for change**

- Outline past positive experiences (GLM)
- Foundations for change / periods of desistance (YJB)
- Past proven safety / exceptions to harm (SOS)
- When this problem has been managed well before (MI)

**Needs to happen?**

**Contingency planning**

- Plan for changes in circumstances



**Steps down**

- Engage young person in an intervention plan (GLM)
- Identify steps needed (SOS)
- Young Person's Actions (YJB)
- Formulate plan of action (MI)

**Others supporting plan**

- Intervention plan (GLM)
- What needs to happen (SOS)
- Workers /Parents actions in targets, other plans (YJB)
- How can we help achieve change (MI)

**Safe ground**

- 'Good life' (GLM)
- Aims and outcomes (YJB)
- Safety achieved to close case (SOS)
- 'Problem sorted' (MI)

