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| **8.1**  | **Remember that it’s their choice**Supporting desistance journeys  |
| **Young person:** |   |
| **Practitioner:** |   |
| **Date:** |   |

Young people **have the right to make their own choices** (even if that’s to continue offending), and although we might like to, **we shouldn’t try to make their decisions for them**.

Our role is to encourage, support and **help make the decision to stop offending as attractive to them as possible.** Buteven then, **the decision to “go straight”, can be tough**, and often involves more sacrifices than we realise.

Many **take time** to make this decision, and then **need ongoing support to make it stick.**

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|  | **There is no ‘manual’ for how to manage desistance journeys, but the following foundations represent a supportive approach to practice which can help young people through their transition to desistance:** |
| 1. **build positive relationships:** Focus on relationships with young people, rather than prioritising interventions; providing engagement, a listening ear, motivation and encouragement.
2. **be realistic:** Desistance is a journey and lapses/relapses are to be expected. How these are dealt with is critical. Focus on encouraging progress and understanding if they stumble or fall on the way.
3. **recognise the importance of language:** Labelling young people (for example. as ‘young offenders’) confirms offending identities when we’re encouraging them to leave these behind.
4. **use custody and sanctions sparingly:** Sanctions can be damaging to young people’s prospects or perceptions of themselves. These should be used only when absolutely necessary.
5. **personalise our interventions:** It’s important to adapt processes and procedures (as far as possible) to fit the young person, not expect them to fit around the systems.
6. **recognition of the significance of social contexts:** It’s easy to underestimate the importance of social contexts and constraints with family, school, peers, community and work.
7. **promoting redemption:** We must recognise and reward attempts to give up crime; encouraging and confirming positive change and using restorative approaches wherever possible.
8. **create opportunities for change and integration:** Young people should experience belonging to (adult) society; reward constructive activities with a taste of a positive social identity.
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