

## What is the Footprints Tool?

The Footprints Tool has been developed to help a young person understand the various people, places, and systems that make up their support circle. It is a form of eco-map intervention that a transition coach should use with young people.

Transition Coaches should consider using the Footprints tool in the first 3 months of working with young people as an opportunity to better understand a young person's relationships and their goals/aspirations.

Here's a simple guide to help you get started:

### **Explain the purpose of the Footprints:**

Start by asking the young person if they have ever mapped out the people, places and things that are important to them.

Tell them that while you are going to be a reliable person in their life, the focus of your work is about supporting them as a young man/woman/person to grow and become connected and part of their community. Tell them that it is not just about people or things that help them, but also the people/places that might rely on them.

Let them know that sometimes talking about these things can bring up pain, grief or loss, and that you will check in the next day to see how they are traveling.

### **Prepare for the Activity:**

Set up a time and place to complete the Footprints tool with the young person. Finding a quiet place where there is some privacy, and the young person feels comfortable to connect and talk is important.

Review the information you have collected as part of Stage II, and any genograms, cultural plans or other sources of information you might have that might help you guide the conversation in a trauma informed way.

Bring along a set of coloured markers, paper and perhaps some tactile objects for the young person to fidget with while you talk.

**Use the Template or Draw the Circles:** Draw four circles on a large piece of paper or a whiteboard. Using colour textas or whiteboard markers can help make the process more engaging.

Label the inner circle with the young person's name.

The first circle (green) around is for connections that are "meaningful and positive"

The next circle (amber) around it is for relationships that are "uncertain".

The final circle (red) is for connections that may require further planning or support or are not safe or stable for the young person.

The Grey rectangle encompassing the circles is the 'No go' zone which indicates the young person does not want to currently explore these relationships.

### **Fill in the circles:**

Ask the young person to identify the people/places/things that belong in each circle. For example, in the inner circle, they might write down their name, or perhaps some words that reflect their personal strengths.

In the "meaningful and positive" circle, they might list the names of people they trust and rely on, places that are important to them. This might include their closest friend, or a family member, or a place or country that they find healing. Normalise the fact that some people won't have anyone in their inner circle because they find it hard to trust.

In the amber circle, they might write the names of relationships that are new or they are unsure of, or connections to people/thing that they have mixed feelings about. This might include workers from services, family or friends that they have mixed feelings about. As a new coach you might place yourself there.

The final circle is for people/things that might be of concern to the young person, or relationships that might be damaged or broken from either perspective. Fill in this circle without probing for details or information about the people or places.

### **Reflect on the Footprints Tool:**

Finally, take some time to reflect on the footprints tool with the young person. Ask them what they noticed about their support circles, and whether there are any areas where they would like to strengthen their connections or improve relationships.

You can also use the footprints tool as a starting point for identifying goals and strategies for the young person to grow their support circles. For example, you might pick a relationship that the young person would like to strengthen and draw a line from where they are to the edge of the next closest circle, asking them 'What would have to happen for this person/thing to move closer to you'

Remember, the Footprints tool is a collaborative process that should be driven by the young person and their perspective. By working together to create an footprints tool, you can help the young person develop a deeper understanding of their support network and build their confidence in growing connections and relationships, and a sense of belonging.

## **Ways to Deepen the Conversation**

### **Footprints Tool Question Cards:**

These cards can be used as conversation prompts to help the coach support the young person to explore and talk about the people, places and things that are important in their life.

### **Footprints Word Prompt List:**

The young person can use this list of words as prompts when completing the Footprints activities to help capture all the important people, places and things important to them.

### **Connect the Circles:**

Once all the circles are filled in, ask the young person to connect them with lines. You can use different kinds of lines to represent different kinds of connections. Double lines for strong relationships, single lines for connections, dotted lines to show inconsistent connections. Arrows to point out where the energy in relationships goes.

For example, they might draw a line from their biological mother's name to their sister's name to show that they are connected, but the arrow might point to their mother to show that their sister supports their mother.

### Reflect on the Past:

Encourage the young person to think about people/places from their past who they may have lost touch with, or not considered in years.

### Invite Others to Help:

Young people who are interested in navigating their own connections to their biological family, or cultural identity may be open to sharing filling in their Footprints tool with an elder or someone who knows their family well.

This can be a great opportunity to safely help young people to learn about their identity and connection to country and culture.

### Review and Reflect on Previous Footprints:

Revisit the tool every 6/12 months and look at the last time you did it and where things were at. Celebrate the growth and development over time.

## Ways to Make it More Engaging

### Drawing in the Sand:

Taking a young person to a quiet beach or river edge and draw out the circles in the sand. Use rocks to illustrate different people and take a photo and send to the young person and keep for your records.

### Nerf Guns:

Draw the circles on a whiteboard and use Nerf Guns with suction darts, getting the young person to target where on the support circles the people/places should be located.

Take a photo and share with the young person and keep for your records.

