

Almost all the examples of rites of passage from the anthropology literature are highly prescriptive. They were intended to initiate youth in small, highly homogeneous communities, where consensus about community values and appropriate behaviours can be easily established, into a rather limited number of adult roles. In today's pluralistic societies where there are multiple possibilities for values and ethics that inform and guide expectations for behaviour, Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010) ask: can meaningful rites of passage be developed? They believe they can. The challenge, they say, is to help the communities articulate their shared values and develop processes and rituals that effectively impart these values to youth. Derived from over 40 years of practice and extending van Gennep's three stages of the rite of passage, Blumenkrantz and Goldstein identify twenty elements that they claim contribute to an effective, contemporary community-based rite of passage:

Principle/Characteristic	Definition
<i>Paradigm shift.</i>	Adolescent development is connected to a community development process rather than being seen solely as an intra-psychic phenomenon. Interventions are ecological rather than individually oriented.
<i>Community values and ethics.</i>	The hallmark of a community-based rite of passage strategy is the creation of intentional, inclusive community dialogues to address what are the values and expectations that youth must carry forward to insure the future success of the community. There must be deliberate structures that allow these community discussions to occur so that some consensus about essential expectations for behaviour and values emerge. This process must precede the creation of experiences that foster youths' understanding, appreciation and commitment to these expectations.
<i>Program success relies on relationships</i>	Meaningful outcomes ultimately depend upon the quality of the relationships between youth and adults, and between the adults and the "program." Positive outcomes only occur when people within a setting are intimately connected to the creation and/or adaptation of a strategy. It is only then that a strategy can be implemented with sufficient commitment and creativity to make it a success.
<i>You can only bring someone as far as you have been yourself</i>	If relationships are key, then those who are initiators of youth's coming of age need training and professional development to build their personal awareness and resources. Individuals need to undergo their own initiatory experience and rite of passage to aid his or her transition to maturity to be an effective initiator of youth.
<i>It must happen in the home community</i>	Children grow up, by and large, in communities that are defined by geographic boundaries and real live interpersonal interactions. Connection to an actual geographic place, especially when there is deep contact with nature and a psychological sense of community is critical to a sense of self and security for children. Effective rites of passage establish a safe place for intentional conversations to occur between citizens of the community, youth and adults.
<i>Rites of passage create expectations for socially appropriate behaviours.</i>	Coming of age in a rites of passage experience involves creating and supporting intentional environments that transmit essential values and ethics that guide and inform expectations for socially appropriate behaviours.
<i>Rituals represent a detailed sequence of actions that are regularly followed.</i>	Ritual, as part of the Rites of Passage experience can set a tone and impact climate in ways that help to create a productive context for learning.
<i>Adversity or personal challenge.</i>	Experiences that challenge the individual emotionally and/or physically and which present opportunities to learn new values and/or skills.
<i>Silence.</i>	Children and youth grow up in a cacophony of sound that makes the "call to adventure," the internal alarm clock awakening them to the coming of age process almost inaudible. Silence helps a young person develop an internal dialogue for narrating and making sense of what is going on around them.
<i>Stories, myths or legends.</i>	Stories passed down from previous generations that convey morals or cultural values.
<i>Connection with nature.</i>	Experiences that help individuals realize and appreciate their connection and interdependence on the natural environment.
<i>Time alone for reflection.</i>	Time intentionally set aside for a person to reflect on his/her personal values, actions and beliefs.
<i>Connection with ancestral roots.</i>	The opportunity to learn, value and appreciate one's connection to those who went before and the values and ethics their heritage embraces.
<i>Play.</i>	The opportunity to help individuals find their "bliss," those activities that they can immerse themselves in with great passion, and from which they receive unbridled joy.
<i>Giving away one's previous attitudes, behaviors, etc.</i>	The coming of age process through rites of passage includes the giving up or giving away of some aspect, e.g., behaviour, attitude, cherished item, that characterized their former status. This process conveys a reality that change – leaving something dear in the past behind – is an integral part of the transition.
<i>Non-ordinary states of reality.</i>	The use of sanctioned behaviours such as vision quest, meditation, yoga, movement and dance, play in 'in the zone' with sports and hobbies to experience non-ordinary states of reality.
<i>Obligation to service to the larger community.</i>	Through the initiatory process, adolescents are oriented to recognize that service to the community is an essential part of becoming a fully functioning adult in society.
<i>Changes of appearance that express/reflect new status.</i>	As recognition of their transition to a new status, initiates may adorn themselves with some external symbol that symbolizes this attainment. This might include special cloths, adornments, and badges etc. that are awarded during public rites of passage.
<i>Opportunities to demonstrate new competencies & status.</i>	Opportunities for participants to demonstrate publicly newly acquired skills and status.
<i>Celebration of status.</i>	Community celebrations in which the new status of initiates is recognized and acclaimed.

TABLE 1: Twenty elements of rites of passage, Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010)