

Ideas for Building Developmental Relationships

Try these ideas to stimulate thinking about how different people might be more intentional in building each element of the developmental relationships framework. These ideas build on insights from focus groups and interviews, as well as research on the elements of developmental relationships. They are adapted from the Search Institute publication, *Relationships First*.

Ideas For Adults

Express Care

- Pay attention. Focus on youth when they are talking about things that matter to them. Put away your cell phone.
- Follow up with young people when you know they are going through something, rather than waiting for them to bring it up.
- Share in some humor, fun, and laughter amid the practical tasks.

Challenge Growth

- Highlight future goals. Talk with young people about the things they look forward to or dream about.
- Challenge them to think differently by asking hard questions, providing alternate explanations, and encouraging openness to different opinions. This helps them build new skills and expand their own thinking.
- Emphasize mistakes as necessary parts of learning. Praise them for hard work, whether they succeed or fail.

Provide Support

- Offer information and practical help to solve a practical problem, or loan them something they may need.
- Show young people how to ask for help when they need it.
- Shift levels of support. Give more support when young people are struggling, and less when they are making progress. Step back as their skills and confidence build.

Share Power

- Let young people make decisions about activities you do together and what you talk about. Don't jump in too fast when they don't make quick decisions or bring up new things to talk about.
- When you can, help young people think through options choices ("So, what could you do differently to tackle this problem?"), rather than solving challenges for them.
- Learn from young people—and show it. Young people have a lot to teach adults. Let them know when you've learned something from them that you're excited about.

Expand Possibilities

- Connect me with people and places that broaden my world. When young people seem curious about an activity, topic, or issue, ask questions such as "what strikes you about this?"
- Introduce young people to a wide range of people, places, ideas, cultures, and vocations. Start with ones they're curious about.
- Broaden the web of relationships. Connect young people to people who share their interests or can expand their world.

Ideas For Parenting Adults

Express Care

- Ask follow-up questions so you both know you're interested and following what is important to them.
- Find satisfaction in doing things for and with your child, even if these things wouldn't otherwise be important to you.

Challenge Growth

- Expect your children to do their best, even when doing something they don't really like.
- Teach your children that making mistakes is a part of learning.

Provide Support

- When you teach your child a skill, demonstrate it by breaking it into smaller steps.
- When your children are not getting the help they need, find people who can address the issue.

Share Power

- Include your children in thinking about decisions, even when you have to make the final call.
- When you disagree, take time to understand each other's point of view.

Expand Possibilities

- Find ways for your children to spend time with people who are different from your family.
- Encourage your children to try things they might be interested in. Maybe even try it together.

MORE IDEAS for families from [Keep Connected](#) and from the booklet [Bringing Developmental Relationships Home: Tips and Relationship Builders](#).

Ideas For Teachers

Express Care

- Strive to understand and show sensitivity to students' feelings.
- Use varied teaching strategies to make learning enjoyable, and to help students connect with you and each other.

Challenge Growth

- Emphasize mastery and self-improvement more so than doing better than other students.
- Challenge students to reach high expectations. Hold them accountable.

Provide Support

- Provide specific and descriptive feedback for students to use toward their improvement.
- Teach strategies for performing and learning under pressure.

Share Power

- Give students classroom choices within rules and safety limits.
- Ask students for input on assignments, class content, and how they can show proficiency.

Expand Possibilities

- Demonstrate how what students are learning relates to their interests and to success outside of school and in the future.
- Connect students with educators, other students, and community members who can explore with them areas of personal interest and strength.

Ideas For Youth Program Leaders

Express Care

- Work to understand young people's points of view when they share ideas or opinions.
- Do what you say you will do, and keep your promises.

Challenge Growth

- Challenge young people to try things that are a little hard for them to do.
- Help young people find their own solutions, rather than just telling them what to do.

Provide Support

- Help young people think through options and resources when they encounter obstacles.
- Show young people how to ask for help when they need it.

Share Power

- Provide opportunities for young people to lead programs based on their interests.
- Emphasize building community and serving others through youth-initiated projects.

Expand Possibilities

- Introduce young people to other cultures, ideas, and places that help them discover their place in the world.
- Model being a curious learner by asking questions and sharing what you're learning in your own life.

Ideas For Young People

Express Care

- When talking with friends, ask follow-up questions that help you get to know them better.
- Let friends know you noticed when they do something you admire.

Challenge Growth

- Encourage friends to spend time doing things that will help them reach their future goals and dreams.
- Model how you put in effort to learn. Push back if others dismiss the value of learning.

Provide Support

- When a friend can't figure out how to solve a problem, offer to talk it out together.
- Offer your support when friends face challenges. If needed, ask a trusted adult to be an ally and resource.

Share Power

- When you're on a team or in a group, practice listening to others, negotiating, and making decisions that work well for everyone.
- Notice peers who tend to be left out or are quiet. Find ways to include them and give them a voice.

Expand Possibilities

- Take turns with friends trying new food, music, or outings, based on each other's interests.
- Introduce friends to people who can help them learn things that interest them.

