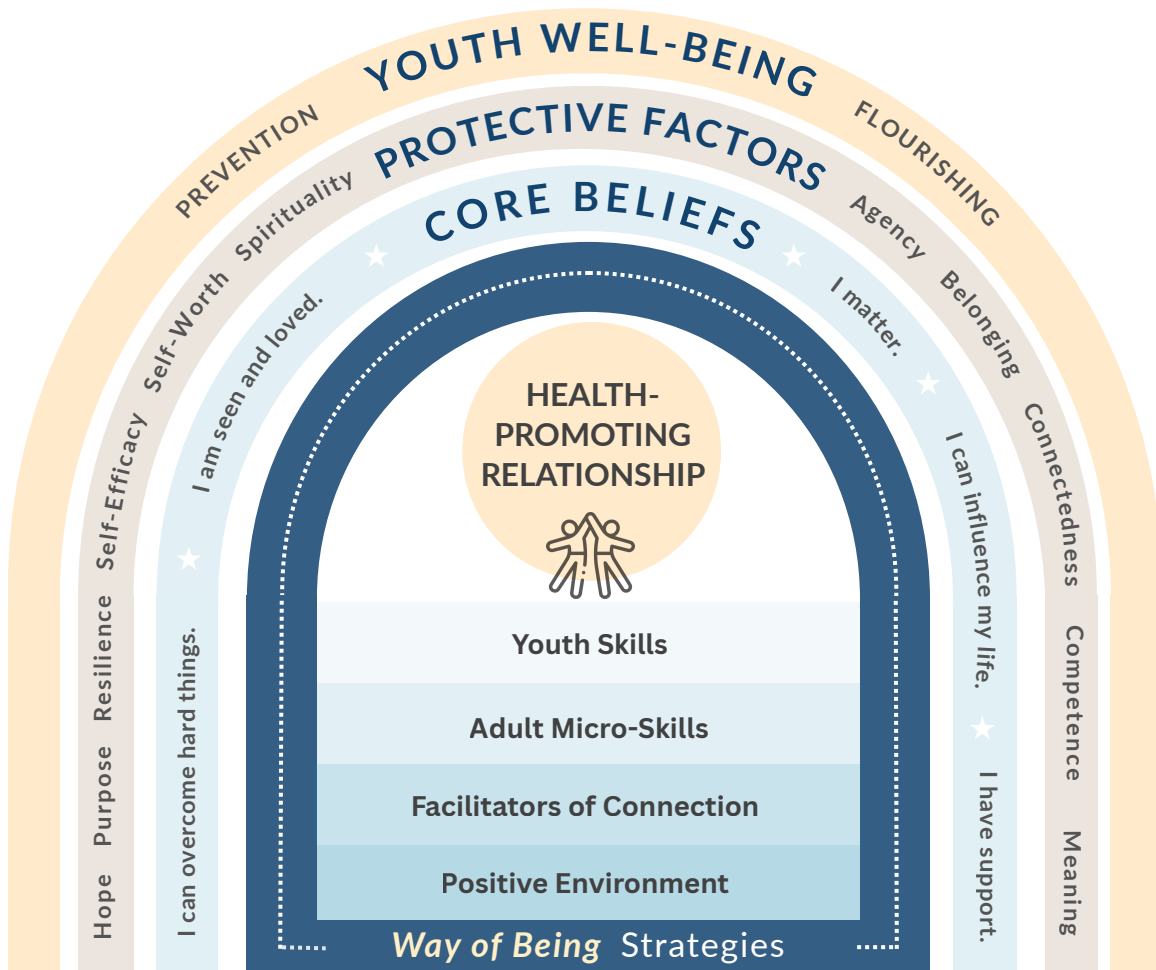


HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS PARADIGM TOOLKIT

Cultivating Protective Beliefs in Youth Ages 11-18
through a "Way of Being"



Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm

ABOUT

The purpose of this toolkit is to operationalize and support application of the **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm**. This paradigm describes a fundamental way of being in relationships that can cultivate protective beliefs in youth ages 11-18 to prevent mental and behavioral health risks and promote flourishing.

CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS

- The Child & Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative
- Center for Behavioral Health Integration, LLC

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was prepared by *A Division for Advancing Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT)* at the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) in collaboration with Dr. Christina Bethell of the *Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative* and Dr. Jody Kamon of the *Center for Behavioral Health Integration*. ADAPT would like to extend a special thank you to Heather Ariyeh for co-designing the paradigm visual and to our many external contributors and reviewers who generously shared their time and expertise, providing unique perspectives and examples to support the translation of the science on relationships into practice.

- Heather Ariyeh
- Rebecca Bates
- Miles Bonny
- Bobbie Boyer
- Lee Anne Dodge
- Rick Frost
- Alexis Ganz
- Ashley Hall
- Rebecca Hoffman
- Tiffany Jones
- Robert LaChausse
- Hanno Petras
- Craig PoVey
- Linda Richter
- Nathaniel Riggs
- Amy Ronshausen
- Beth Shrader
- Alicia Stromme-Tobin
- Amy Syvertsen
- Win Turner
- Jonathan Weiner
- Keith Weis
- Elizabeth Weybright
- Jenny Wood

DISCLAIMER

This project was supported by Grant #G23WB0004A, awarded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Office of National Drug Control Policy or the United States Government.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

All material within this document is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from the authors with appropriate citation of this source.

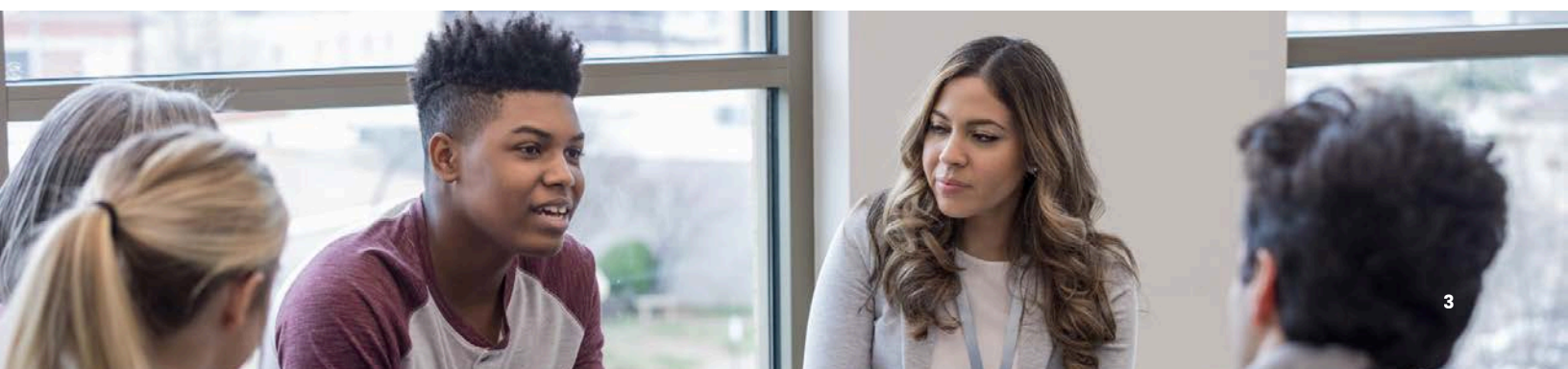
Recommended reference: A Division for Advancing Prevention and Treatment. Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm (Toolkit): Cultivating Protective Beliefs in Youth Ages 11-18. Published March 19, 2026. <https://www.hidta.org/adapt/prevention-intervention-resource-center/>

Publication #: PBT25-011-06

Release Date: April 9, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary of Terms	04
Orientation to the Health–Promoting Relationships Paradigm	05
▶ Health–Promoting Relationships Mindset	10
Protective Beliefs	11
Way of Being Strategies	13
▶ 1. Create the environment.	14
▶ 2. Facilitate connection.	15
▶ 3. Engage micro–skills.	21
▶ 4. Develop skills in youth.	28
Reaching the Full Potential of Relationships	40
▶ Individuality and Background	40
▶ Beyond the Individual: Embracing Health–Promoting Relationships as an Organization	45
Sharing Health–Promoting Relationships with Others	47
▶ Main Messages	48
Assessments	49
▶ Self–Assessment: Facilitators of Connection	49
▶ Self–Assessment: Micro–Skills for Trusted Adults	50
▶ Organizational Self–Reflection & Planning Tool	52
Playbooks	55
▶ Parents and Caregivers	60
▶ Educators	62
▶ Coalitions	64
▶ Law Enforcement and Justice System	66
▶ Healthcare Professionals	68
▶ Sports Coaches	70
References	72
About ADAPT	78



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS PARADIGM

- 1 **Health-promoting relationship:** a way of being that enables¹¹ health and well-being in youth by cultivating protective beliefs
- 2 **Way of being:** how we approach life and relationships within any given moment or context. A way of being in health-promoting relationships is how we show up and interact with youth to enable them to be well by cultivating core protective beliefs. It is comprised of four intentional strategies: create the environment, facilitate connection, engage micro-skills, and develop skills in youth.
- 3 **Facilitators of connection:** core qualities that foster meaningful human connection.²⁴ Definitions for each facilitator of connection can be found [here](#).
- 4 **Adult micro-skills:** concrete actions and communication strategies trusted adults can use to strengthen connection and activate or reinforce protective beliefs
- 5 **Belief:** something one holds or considers to be true²⁵
- 6 **Well-being:** a holistic experience of health, happiness, meaning, and resilience²³

PROTECTIVE & FLOURISHING FACTORS

- 1 **Agency:** having the capacity, capability, and willpower to produce desired outcomes in one's life²⁶
- 2 **Belonging:** the feeling of being accepted and approved by a group or by society as a whole²⁶
- 3 **Competence:** the ability to exert control over one's life, to cope with specific problems effectively²⁶
- 4 **Connectedness:** being in a close emotional relationship with others²⁷
- 5 **Hope:** the expectation that one will have positive experiences or that a potentially threatening or negative situation will not materialize or will ultimately result in a favorable state of affairs²⁶
- 6 **Meaning:** the extent to which one's life is experienced as making sense, as being directed and motivated by valued goals, and as mattering to the world²⁶
- 7 **Purpose:** the reason for which someone lives or exists²⁶
- 8 **Resilience:** the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands²⁶
- 9 **Self-efficacy:** an individual's subjective perception of their capability to perform in a given setting or to attain desired results²⁶
- 10 **Self-worth:** an individual's evaluation of themselves as a valuable, capable human being deserving of respect and consideration²⁶
- 11 **Spirituality:** a sense of interconnectedness, belief in a higher power, or involvement in spiritual practices or religious activities¹³

OTHER TERMS

- 1 **Safeness:** A subjective feeling of emotional and psychological security and comfort

ORIENTATION TO THE HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS PARADIGM

This toolkit illuminates the power of relationships to promote youth well-being. A *simple truth* about relationships is that we need them to be mentally and physically well.¹⁻³ Humans are biologically wired for social connection to fulfill basic needs, and frequent, meaningful social connection is essential for well-being. A *quiet truth* about relationships, however, is that fostering meaningful connection and positive relationships is a skill that requires intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, intention, and life-long commitment to growth.

One of the most important types of relationships youth can have is with trusted adults, who can have a profound impact on positive youth development and well-being.⁴ Many factors that prevent harmful behaviors in youth and promote protection and flourishing in youth can be cultivated through their relationships with trusted adults. Having at least two adults who take genuine interest in the life of a youth is one positive childhood experience among seven that, when combined with at least two others, boosts resilience and reduced rates of depression, substance use, delinquent behavior, and risky sexual behavior.^{5,6} The experience of supportive, trusted adult relationships has been also shown to promote resilience and mitigate risks such as mental and physical health challenges following adversity.^{7,8}

Trusted adults are chosen by youth as safe figures that listen without judgment, agenda, or expectation, but with the sole purpose of supporting and encouraging positivity within a person's life. They can be anyone and often possess qualities such as being nonjudgmental, a good listener, honest, reliable, vulnerable when appropriate, and consistent in how they show up for youth. Trusted adults also offer clear boundaries and limits to youth and are willing to help youth exercise their agency and work through issues in their own way.⁹

At the core of trusted adult relationships with youth lies human connection, and how this connection is experienced can have a powerful influence on youth development.¹⁰

A “**health-promoting relationship**” is a way of being with youth that enables their healthy development and well-being by cultivating protective beliefs. This specific approach to relationships is 1) intentional towards the outcomes of health and well-being and 2) offers a means to reach those outcomes by enabling youth to increase control over, and to improve, their health.¹¹ A health-promoting relationship between a trusted adult and youth serves as both an intervention and a pathway for delivering other interventions. Take a moment and consider the notably vast number of evidence-based programs, practices, and policies that require a health-promoting relationship to achieve their outcomes!

The **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** is a conceptual framework that offers an organized way of thinking about how trusted adult relationships with youth can help youth ages 11-18 achieve and maintain well-being as they grow and develop to reach their full potential. The paradigm represents a **way of being** for trusted adults in their relationships with youth and describes an approach for cultivating core protective beliefs in youth using **four intentional strategies**:

Way of Being

1

CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT. Trusted adults can create an emotional and physical environment for youth by paying attention to both tangible and intangible influences such as emotional tone, norms, goals, values, standards, expectations, role modeling, culture, and sensory elements like music or artwork - i.e. the environment is the overall experience you create to set the stage for health-promoting conversation or activities.

2

FACILITATE CONNECTION. Facilitators of connection are factors that should be incorporated as part of the approach to building, or “facilitating”, strong connection with others. Trusted adults can enhance their ability to connect with youth by leaning into connection facilitators such as self-awareness, patience, respect, full presence, humility, authenticity, nonjudgment, and honesty in their moments with youth.

3

ENGAGE MICRO-SKILLS. Trusted adults can use small, specific actions and communication strategies, such as full presence, curiosity, and activating agency, to strengthen connection and activate protective beliefs in youth.

4

DEVELOP SKILLS IN YOUTH. When youth feel connected to a trusted adult, they are more receptive to learning and applying new skills. Trusted adults can be mindful of building or reinforcing protective skills in youth through planned or spontaneous opportunities.

ORIENTATION TO THE HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS PARADIGM (CONT.)

Growing into a *way of being* in health-promoting relationships that builds genuine connection and strengthens protective belief systems in youth begins with YOU, the trusted adult. To bring your most authentic and connected self into your relationships with youth, trusted adults must be willing to gain self-awareness, do their own healing work, and intentionally release qualities and behaviors that do not match their values and beliefs. Doing so will support you in engaging the health-promoting relationship *way of being* strategies.

Intended Audience

The intended audiences for this toolkit are prevention professionals and other trusted adults who routinely engage with youth ages 11-18 and are interested in making the most of their relationships with youth to help prevent mental health and behavioral risks and promote flourishing.



Examples of the intended audience include a variety of trusted adult roles such as parents/caregivers, educators, police and school resource officers, healthcare professionals, coalition leaders, sports coaches, and others. Playbooks for many of these roles can be found beginning on page 55.

Development of the Paradigm

The **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** was developed with the purpose of synthesizing relationship science to bring attention to the vital components of adult-youth relationships that are needed to promote youth well-being. As with all tools developed by ADAPT, a systematic approach was used to gather information for the paradigm. This ensures all feasible forms of input and feedback from experts from the field were considered and align with the current state of the science. This toolkit was developed to support users in applying the paradigm's approach to health promotion through relationships. All resources and references were selected based on their evidence, relatability, usability, and feasibility.

Key resources informing the paradigm and supporting material include:

- *Protective Factors for Adolescent and Young Adult Substance Use by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)*¹²⁻¹³
- *Developmental Relationships Framework by Search Institute*¹⁴
- *Positive Childhood Experiences (Bethell, Jones, Gombojav, Linkenbach, & Sege, 2019)*⁵
- *Social Emotional Learning*¹⁵
- *Family Resilience and Connection Index (Bethell, Gombojav, & Whitaker, 2019)*¹⁶
- *Protective Factors Against Delinquency by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*¹⁷
- *Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide (CDC)*¹⁸
- *Measurement scales for all protective and flourishing*¹⁹ factors used in the paradigm

While these resources span developmental stages, they overlap in their inclusion of the 11-18 year old period of development. While many of the concepts within this toolkit apply across developmental stages, the focus of this toolkit, and resulting examples and strategies shared, focus in on youth ages 11-18.

The **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** is a relational prevention approach that focuses on the broader outcome of well-being through enhancement of trusted adult relationships. The approach emphasizes widespread application by any trusted adult to promote positive youth outcomes across social and environmental contexts. Health-promoting relationships are not considered a standalone prevention strategy. Rather, they are recommended as a foundational component that can complement and enhance prevention activities within a comprehensive prevention strategy.

Learn more about
*Developing a Comprehensive
Community-Based Prevention
Strategy* [HERE](#).

ORIENTATION TO THE HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS PARADIGM (CONT.)

How to Use This Toolkit

The toolkit is designed to support people trained in the **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** by helping them to identify opportunities to enhance connection with youth, inform activities that will strengthen and sharpen skills within trusted adults to support youth well-being, and promote a culture of youth well-being in the systems where they live and work. Guidance for trusted adults who want to mobilize their relationships with youth to foster the outcomes of protection, prevention, and flourishing is provided; therefore, even for those new to the paradigm, the strategies shared can be used.

Each section of the toolkit presents strategies for achieving these outcomes with considerations for one-on-one, group, and organizational-level application. The first two sections identify core protective beliefs and the four-part *way of being* described above to support you in creating a positive environment, facilitating meaningful connection, developing micro-skills (i.e., core competencies in how we show up and engage with youth that support youth health and well-being), and supporting youth in recognizing and building their own set of skills to reinforce protective beliefs. Remember to continue 1) considering the type of environment you are creating, 2) connecting meaningfully, and 3) and using your micro-skills as you help youth focus on skill-building!

Additional information to support personal development and the application of toolkit strategies can be found in later sections of the toolkit. These sections describe how to help health-promoting relationships reach their full potential, scale toolkit content beyond individual application, and assess your ability in connection and micro-skills. A final playbook section at the conclusion of the toolkit offers ideas for how to bring toolkit content to life for specific roles. Concrete starting points for creating the physical and emotional environment, having conversations, and growing as individuals and organizations are presented.

Collectively, the toolkit is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide for trusted adults who have received training in the **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm**. However, it is also designed to provide effective strategies that align with the paradigm that any trusted adult or prevention professional can incorporate into their existing prevention activities. We recognize that application of the paradigm's components can be strengthened through ongoing training. **Subscribe** to ADAPT's listserv to stay informed about upcoming trainings and additional resources to support your application of the paradigm.

It is not expected that the reader will review the toolkit all at once and have learned all the content. Rather, we encourage you to review the material, focus in on sections that you have identified can best support you in advancing a health-promoting approach with youth, and routinely come back to the toolkit as a reference tool and guidance for additional strategies that may be useful to you.

Getting Started

The following page lists steps you may choose when learning and applying the contents of this toolkit. These steps are not designed to be sequential or to address all the domains of the paradigm at once. For example, you might focus on one aspect for a "deep dive" into understanding a skill-building domain and later return to the toolkit to repeat the process with other aspects, or consider how you might apply the paradigm beyond individual interactions to organizations, agencies, or systems. As with any "toolkit", you are encouraged to select the best-fitting tool for the task at hand by leveraging your lived experience and professional insights while attending to the needs of the youth and the contexts in which they and your relationships with them exist.

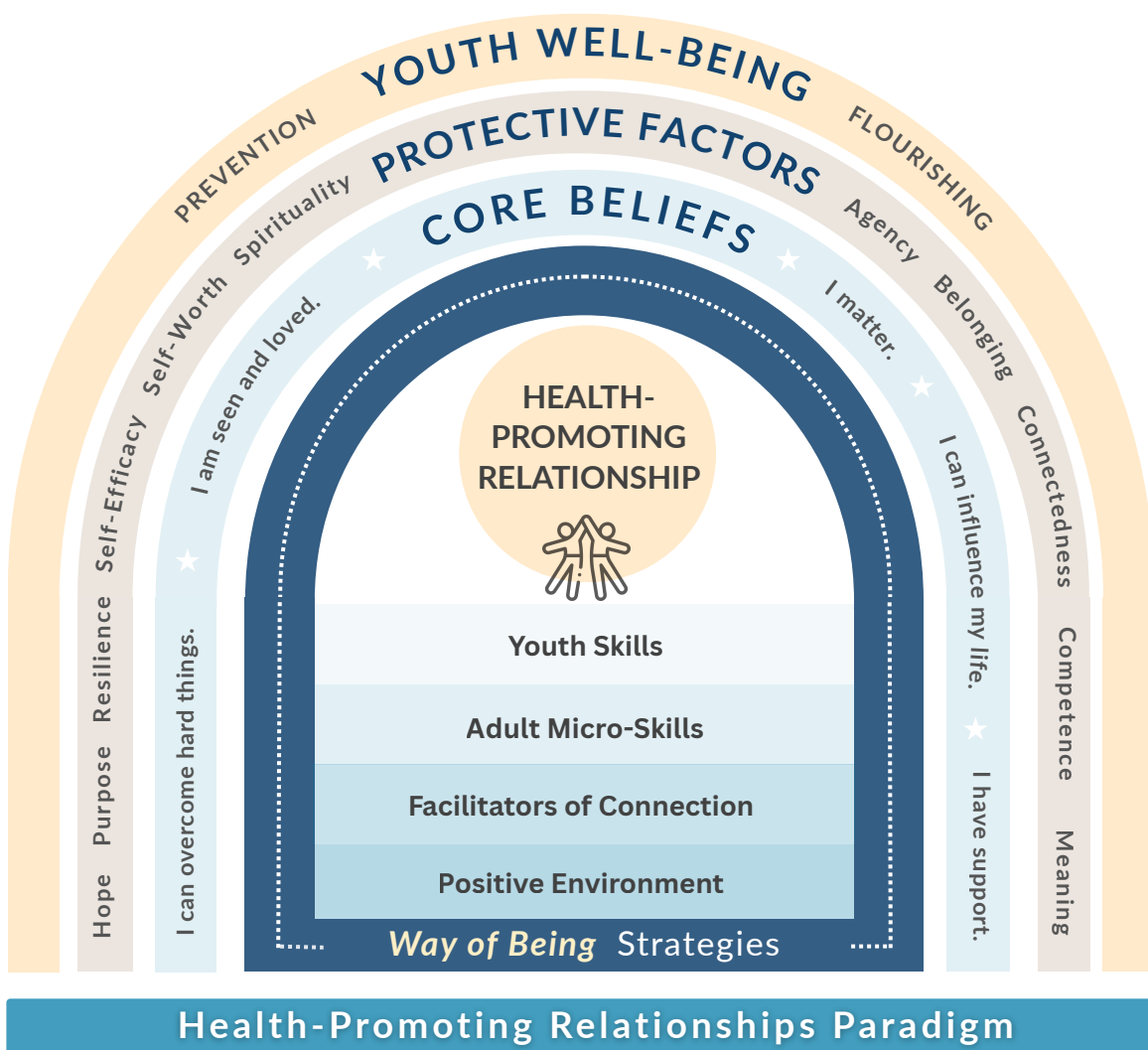


Steps for getting started include:

- 1 Orient yourself to the health-promoting relationships paradigm and why it matters.
- 2 Reflect on your current mindset, skills, and relationships with youth and identify opportunities for development.
- 3 Plan how you will integrate health-promoting strategies (creating the environment, facilitating connection, using micro-skills, and supporting skill development in youth) into those relationships.
- 4 Share what you've learned and help others take action, too!

The figure below visually depicts the **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** as consisting of five critical components starting from the bottom center and moving outward. All are described in more detail on the next page.

1. WAY OF BEING STRATEGIES
2. HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIP
3. CORE BELIEFS
4. PROTECTIVE AND FLOURISHING FACTORS
5. PREVENTION, FLOURISHING, AND WELL-BEING



The five components of the paradigm are described in more detail below:

1 WAY OF BEING STRATEGIES

1. Create the environment.
2. Facilitate connection.
3. Engage micro-skills.
4. Develop skills in youth.

Through creating the environment, facilitating connection, and engaging their own words and actions, adults can foster trust – the belief in the reliability, truth, and strength of others¹⁹ – which is essential for nurturing meaningful, supportive relationships and engaging youth in developing skills to cultivate well-being

Facilitators of Connection

Authenticity, Care, Empathy, Full Presence, Honesty, Humility, Kindness, Love, Nonjudgment, Nurturance, Patience, Respect, Self-Acceptance, Self-Alignment, Self-Awareness, Vulnerability

2 HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIP

At the heart of the paradigm is a powerful assertion – Health-promoting relationships are essential for shaping healthy youth development. When intentionally nurtured, they can create the conditions, behaviors, and supports that both protect against adverse outcomes and actively foster young people’s ability to thrive. Therefore, the relationship itself is beneficial to the youth and serves to deliver other interventions that promote well-being.



3 CORE BELIEFS

Through trusted relationships as a foundation, youth can develop protective beliefs (what they hold to be true about themselves).²⁰ These more immediate outcomes of health-promoting relationships can all be learned and reinforced within relationships, serving as the “means” of positive development and vehicles for growth and resilience. The beliefs in this paradigm resulted from a synthesis of the best available evidence for 1) substance use, mental health, suicide, and violence prevention in youth and 2) flourishing in youth.

Core Beliefs

1. I am seen and loved.
2. I matter.
3. I can influence my life.
4. I can overcome hard things.
5. I have support.

4 PROTECTIVE AND FLOURISHING FACTORS

Protective beliefs give rise to protective and flourishing factors such as self-worth and resilience. These intermediary outcomes act as buffers against risks¹²⁻²¹ and help reduce the likelihood of harmful behaviors like substance use, suicide, delinquency, and violence.^{12,18,21,22} At the same time, they promote positive development across physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and relational domains.¹²⁻¹³

Protective and Flourishing Factors

Agency, Belonging, Competence (Cognitive, Behavioral, Emotional, Moral, Social), Connectedness, Hope, Meaning, Purpose, Resilience, Self-Efficacy, Self-Worth, Spirituality

5 PREVENTION, FLOURISHING, AND WELL-BEING:

Ultimately, this process leads to long-term outcomes of prevention, protection, and flourishing and culminates in youth well-being – the paradigm’s ultimate goal. Well-being is defined as a holistic experience of health, happiness, meaning, and resilience – the result of relationships that are intentionally cultivated through connection, trust, and the development of beliefs and skills.²³

HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIP MINDSET

An HPR mindset serves as the fertile soil from which health-promoting relationships can develop and flourish. At its core lies a **growth-oriented approach**, where humility invites open learning, honesty builds a pathway for awareness, and self-connection ensures authenticity and alignment with values. This piece of the mindset acknowledges mutual evolution, reminding us that our own personal development is not solitary but also has impact on our relationships with youth.

Equally vital is the willingness to **stretch with purpose**, embracing intentionality to push beyond comfort zones. It suggests doing what it takes, whether through active listening, vulnerability, or consistent effort, to create bonds that heal, empower, and promote youth flourishing. Trusted adults can model this commitment, showing youth that true connection and trusting relationships require deliberate effort.

Being **available, able, motivated, and willing** to engage the HPR *way of being* in both planned and spontaneous moments enables trusted adults to **seize opportunities** and help everyday interactions with youth reach their full potential. Whether in structured or impromptu conversations, this aspect of the mindset represents a **readiness** to seamlessly weave support into the fabric of youth lives across diverse opportunities.

Recognizing the hard work inherent in health-promoting relationships both in ourselves and in our relationships, while also understanding and **celebrating the benefits of HPR** to the trusted adult and the youth, fuels sustained effort. This piece of the mindset acknowledges that health-promoting relationships demand investment but yield immeasurable rewards, like empowered youth who thrive.

Ultimately, personally **valuing health-promoting relationships** elevates them from obligation to passion. When we internalize their worth, balancing growth and connection, we cultivate environments of prevention, protection, and flourishing, proving that the right mindset is not just beneficial, it can be transformative in shaping the culture and community around us.

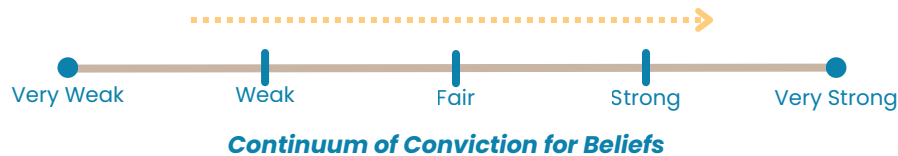


PROTECTIVE BELIEFS

Every interaction with youth is an opportunity to shape their beliefs about themselves, others, and the world around them. Health-promoting relationships serve as pathways that allow trusted adults to take intentional, active steps toward cultivating protective beliefs.

It is important to have a basic understanding of how beliefs are formed to fully appreciate the opportunities for trusted adults to cultivate these beliefs in youth. Exposure to a new belief triggers several processes as we determine how to integrate this new perspective. First, our brain takes in all the relevant information associated with that belief. This includes the sensory information and memories activated by that belief, our social context, and the perceived personal relevance of the belief. With this information, our brains then interpret the meaning of the belief, evaluate its relevance and credibility, and decide whether to accept it. During this process, new beliefs undergo intense scrutiny against pre-existing beliefs, meaning they are put on trial to determine if they are consistent with beliefs already held and if they seem reasonable. This process of belief integration highlights that beliefs are not static but rather continuously updated through interactions with the environment and social context.²⁸ Trusted adults can create positive environments, model healthy behaviors, engage micro-skills, facilitate meaningful connections, and foster skill development in youth to help youth build or reinforce protective beliefs. Neglecting these opportunities can unintentionally cultivate negative beliefs or simply do nothing and be a missed opportunity, especially if the youth does not have many trusted adults in their lives investing in them in similar ways. Attentive and deliberate interactions ensure adults are actively shaping beliefs that support youth's long-term development and well-being.

The table on the next page introduces the five core protective beliefs found in the literature to promote youth well-being when held with strong conviction. Each belief exists on a continuum of conviction (how strongly they hold the belief to be true) ranging from very weak or nonexistent to very strong or firm. Through health-promoting relationships with youth, trusted adults can mobilize them to advance further along the individual continuum for each belief, helping them to progress from "I can be..." to "I am..." as they strive to actualize each belief. This is done through meaningful connection, using micro-skills in everyday interactions, and supporting skill development in youth – all of which affirm and reinforce that these beliefs are indeed true. The synergy among these components helps youth advance along each belief continuum.



In addition to the core protective beliefs, the next table lists common interrelated beliefs related to the core belief. These interrelated beliefs represent components of the core belief and may serve as building blocks toward full conviction of each belief. The third column in the table denotes the protective and flourishing factors shown to contribute to the development of the beliefs. Key takeaways on the function and impact of cultivating protective beliefs within the context of health-promoting relationships include:

- 1 *The five core beliefs represent a fundamental belief system that protects youth in the context of risk, prevents harmful behaviors, and promotes flourishing.*
- 2 *All core beliefs exist on a continuum of strength within each individual youth.*
- 3 *We as trusted adults can aspire to cultivate these core beliefs in youth and equip them with skills, thereby enabling their ability to be well.*
- 4 *Natural opportunities to cultivate protective beliefs in youth include 1) creating a positive physical and emotional environment, 2) engaging facilitators of connection and micro-skills in conversations, 3) seizing spontaneous or planned opportunities to foster skill development, and 4) prioritizing growth as individuals, families, and organizations.*

Table: Core Beliefs, Interrelated Beliefs, & Protective Factors

CORE BELIEFS	INTERRELATED BELIEFS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS
<p>I am seen and loved.</p> <p><i>By others, self, and higher power</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am safe to show myself. • I am respected. • I am cared about. • I can trust you with my truth. • I am accepted for who I am. • I like who I am even with my challenges. • I have people in my life that enjoy being with me even when I am struggling. • I believe in myself. • I have people in my life that believe in me. • I am worthy. • I am loved unconditionally. • I am capable of being seen and loved through faith in myself and a higher power. • My faith is a source of strength for me. • I have a purpose in life. • I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful. • I belong. • I feel connected with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency • Belonging • Competence • Connectedness • Hope • Meaning • Purpose • Resilience • Self-efficacy • Self-worth • Spirituality
<p>I matter.</p> <p><i>To self and others</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am worthy. • I am capable. • I am needed. • I have something to offer. • I add value. • I feel valued. • I am taken seriously and treated fairly. • I have people in my life that rely on me for help, support, or advice. • I matter <i>just because</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging • Competence • Connectedness • Purpose • Self-efficacy • Self-worth
<p>I can influence my life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a purpose in life. • I see possibilities for my future. • I can grow and succeed. • I am responsible for my actions. • I have goals for myself. • I have choices. • I am confident I can take charge of my life. • I am aware of my own strengths. • Learning is important to me. • I can learn from mistakes and setbacks. • My past experiences will help me in the future. • I have people in my life that create opportunities for me to take action and lead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency • Competence • Connectedness • Meaning • Purpose • Resilience • Self-efficacy
<p>I can overcome hard things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When things are hard, I can find strength and hope in myself, others, and a higher power. • I can think of ways to get things in life that are important to me. • I can come up with many ways to solve a problem. • I am capable. • I can learn from mistakes and setbacks. • I can manage my emotions. • I have coping skills to use no matter what comes my way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence • Hope • Resilience • Self-Efficacy • Spirituality
<p>I have support.</p>	<p>I have people in my life that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help me grow, succeed, and reach my full potential. • Believe in me. • Recognize my efforts and achievements. • Guide me through hard situations and systems. • Watch out for me and stand up for me when I need it. • Connect me to people who can help me grow. • Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. • Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectedness • Competence • Hope



WAY OF BEING

A **way of being** describes how we approach life and relationships within any given moment or context. A *way of being* in health-promoting relationships is how we show up and interact with youth to enable them to be well by cultivating core beliefs that form the foundation for lifelong protection and flourishing. This *way of being* is best characterized by **intention** towards four specific strategies. Embodying this intentional *way of being* with youth enhances a trusted adult's ability to build the trust and safeness necessary to understand youth needs, respond in personalized and meaningful ways, and propel youth towards well-being.

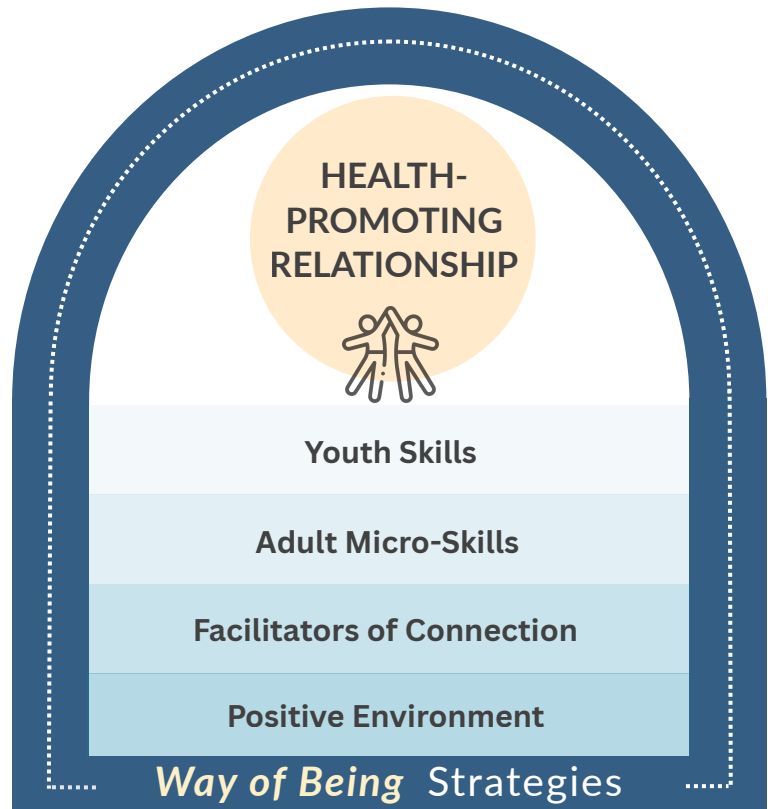
The following four strategies comprise the intentional *way of being* in health-promoting relationships:

1. **Create the environment.**
2. **Facilitate connection.**
3. **Engage micro-skills.**
4. **Develop skills in youth.**

By creating the environment, trusted adults set the physical and emotional tone that conveys belonging, possibility, and opportunity. By facilitating connection, they intentionally embody respect, authenticity, empathy and other qualities that open the door to trust. Through engaging micro-skills, they use small but powerful actions (i.e. curiosity, reflective listening, and empowering language) to deepen dialogue and activate protective beliefs. Finally, by developing skills in youth, they intentionally guide young people toward building resilience, self-regulation, and agency.

When practiced together, these four strategies form a coherent and intentional *way of being*, a presence that consistently nurtures protective factors and reduces risk for substance use, violence, mental health challenges, and suicide. This integration reflects the understanding that prevention is not a single act, but a continuous, intentional process embedded in how adults show up, listen, and respond in the lives of youth. Below are four *way of being* questions one can reflect on before and during interactions with youth:

1. **What messages does the physical and emotional environment I am creating convey to youth?**
2. **How am I facilitating connection with youth today?**
3. **What small, intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?**
4. **How am I seizing or creating opportunities for youth to learn or practice skills that build or reinforce protective beliefs?**



1. Create the environment.

What message does the physical and emotional environment I am creating convey to youth?

The environment around us communicates what is valued and what is possible. Every space sends messages through words, tone, rhythm, and even silence. The way a room feels, how adults respond, and the culture that is modeled all shape whether youth feel safe, valued, and capable. Creating the environment is not just about decoration or comfort but about intentionally designing experiences that cultivate the five core beliefs.²⁹

Trusted adults can create an emotional and physical environment that sets the stage for health-promoting relationships. This involves attention to both tangible and intangible influences, such as emotional tone, norms, goals, values, standards, role modeling, and sensory elements like music or artwork. When the physical and emotional environment communicates calm, respect, and stability, it promotes belonging and growth, and an increased likelihood youth will engage positively and adopt positive social and health behaviors, especially when combined with other prevention efforts.^{30,31}

Below are several considerations for creating a health-promoting physical and emotional environment for youth:

Shape the physical environment with purpose.

Tangible elements such as space, structure, and sensory design can communicate safeness, belonging, and that youth preferences matter.

- Keep areas organized, well-lit, & predictable. Structure builds trust.
- Display youth-centered visuals: photos, affirmations, shared goals.
- Integrate music, color, & art that reflect community identity & calm.
- Involve youth in co-creating the space - naming rooms, choosing décor, or organizing materials.³²

Establish a positive emotional tone.

The emotional tone adults set (calm, patient, and respectful) shapes how youth regulate their own emotions.

- Begin each day or meeting with a warm acknowledgment: "I'm glad you're here."^{30,32}
- Model emotional honesty & repair. Admit mistakes & apologize.³²
- Create group norms together & revisit them regularly.
- Celebrate small wins publicly to build a shared sense of pride.

Role model and reinforce core values in everyday actions.³⁰

- Role model facilitators of connection, micro-skills, and skills for youth.
- Role model self-regulation & empathy under stress. How you respond becomes the lesson. Youth are always watching.
- Frame mistakes as opportunities for growth & self-compassion.^{30,33}
- Reflect organizational values & standards in how rules are enforced & how people are treated.³³

Foster a culture of voice, choice, and contribution.³⁰

- Invite youth into decision-making about projects, activities, or group goals. Ensure all voices are heard. Encourage quieter youth to share.
- Offer choices that matter to the youth.³⁰
- Recognize acts of leadership, creativity, & kindness, not just compliance or performance.
- Celebrate examples of youth influence to reinforce agency.

Create norms and standards that promote a growth mindset and positive choices.

- Use language that communicates the belief: "I know this is hard, and I know you can do it."
- Establish standards that emphasize effort, curiosity, and commitment. Break challenges into manageable steps and frame as opportunities, coaching youth through each phase and in managing frustration.
- Normalize setbacks as part of growth. Replace 'failure' with 'feedback'.
- Encourage peer collaboration so youth experience resilience collectively.

Embed support into everyday interactions.

- Be present & observant. Notice small changes. Check in with care.
- Create rituals of connection (morning check-ins, gratitude rounds, or 'shout-outs').
- Encourage youth to recognize one another's efforts - culture of care.³⁰
- Follow up after difficult moments - your consistency shows that love isn't conditional.³²

2. Facilitate connection.

How well am I connecting with youth in this moment?

Authenticity	Kindness	Respect
Care	Love	Self-Awareness
Empathy	Nonjudgment	Self-Acceptance
Full Presence	Nurturance	Self-Alignment
Honesty	Patience	Vulnerability
Humility		

FUN FACT!

SELF-CONNECTION consists of:

- Self-awareness (awareness of oneself)
- Self-acceptance (acceptance of oneself based on this awareness)
- Self-alignment (alignment of one's behavior with this awareness).

(<https://www.kristinekussman.com/what-is-self-connection/>)

Facilitators of connection lie at the foundation of a health-promoting relationship as they help form trust and emotional safeness in relationships. These qualities must first be developed within oneself before they can serve as a foundation for building relationships with others. Trusted adults need to be willing to do a self-assessment and explore how they are living the facilitators of connection. For example, authenticity represents an honest process of becoming more of what one believes and values even when it is uncomfortable or goes against external expectations. Developing authenticity may include becoming more aware of personal beliefs and values around how to treat others and maturing one's ability to interact with others in ways that reflect those beliefs and values.

Alone, each facilitator offers its own benefit. For example, honesty from a trusted adult helps youth feel respected and valued,³⁴ and humility from a trusted adult increases a youth's openness to receiving messages.³⁵ Remarkably, all facilitators of connection build trust, which allows us to show up as our true selves and weather challenges within the relationship.

The **Facilitators of Connection** table²⁴ ahead is a comprehensive reference that serves a dual purpose: to **unpack and define** the core qualities that foster meaningful human connection, and to provide practical exercises that can **enhance or strengthen** these facilitators over time. For each facilitator, the table provides a clear **definition**, outlines **characteristics** that illustrate what each facilitator looks like in action and offers **specific practices** that individuals can apply in their day-to-day interactions with others to develop and reinforce these capacities. It is important to note that many of the exercises are intrapersonal – internal to oneself. It is vital that as trusted adults, we be willing to self-reflect on how we integrate the facilitators of connection into our being and actions in our daily lives. Through this process, we become more **aware** of our strengths and challenges in each aspect of facilitating connection, and can identify how we can **grow** and what is needed to get there. In setting our goals to strengthen our embodiment of the facilitators of connection, we strive to move forward with **intention** both internally and externally.

As you review the table ahead, we recommend first getting familiar with each facilitator's definitions and sample characteristics. Then head to the Assessments section of the toolkit and complete the *Facilitators of Connection Self-Assessment*. Identify the top 3-5 facilitators you would like to work on. Return to the table and select at least one step you can take to enhance your ability with those facilitators. In doing so, consider 1) the cultural, developmental, and other characteristics of the youth you work with and 2) the environment as you determine the most appropriate way to build and apply each of the connection facilitators. Routinely visit the table and guidance provided within as you work to strengthen each facilitator.

As you spend time with each facilitator of connection, reflect on the following:

- 1 Which of these facilitators feel more natural, and which are more challenging for me right now?
- 2 What would it look and feel like for both me and others if I practiced these more consistently?
- 3 How might others respond or benefit if I engaged these facilitators more often?
- 4 What barriers might I face in doing this, and how can I address them?

Table: Facilitators of Connection Definitions, Characteristics and Exercises

FACILITATOR & DEFINITION	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY
<p>Authenticity</p> <p><i>Aligns actions with individual core values and beliefs with the hope of discovering, and then acting in sync with one's true self³⁶</i></p> <p><i>Represents an honest process of becoming more of what you believe and value.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes time to develop and share opinions • Responds to internal vs external expectations • Forges a unique path to fulfill their passion and purpose • Recognizes and admits faults in oneself • Not threatened by failure or need to have strong self-esteem • Less judgmental of others³⁶ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on your values and what is most important to you. What changes can you make to live by them? 2. If you were a fly on the wall observing yourself, which actions and choices would seem authentic? Which would not? 3. Examine your belief systems and their origins (early childhood, spirituality, etc.). Which beliefs align with your values and which do not?³⁶
<p>Care</p> <p><i>Concern for the well-being of others; a moral ideal whereby the end is protection, enhancement, and preservation of human dignity³⁷</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassionate³⁷ • Altruistic³⁷ • Emotionally intelligent³⁸ • Emotionally stable³⁸ • Exhibits personal integrity³⁸ • Optimistic³⁸ • Creates meaning with others³⁸ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show you care with actions, not words (ex: actively listen). 2. Ask how others are doing. Show genuine interest in their response. 3. Notice and remember the details people share with you. 4. Be intentional about observing the needs of others. 5. Express disagreement and concern when it matters. Do not nit-pick the little things. 6. Help when you can, even in small ways. 7. Be quick to apologize when appropriate. 8. Send notes of encouragement. 9. Check in regularly with those you love.³⁹
<p>Empathy</p> <p><i>An ability to understand and share the feelings of another⁴⁰</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and understands emotions and intentions in self and others⁴¹ • Able to self-regulate emotions⁴¹ • Able to see situations through the eyes of others⁴¹ • Engages with others in ways they need⁴¹ • Displays care and compassion⁴¹ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice a growth mindset. Recognize that empathy can be developed/enhanced.⁴² 2. Expose yourself to different emotions, perspectives, cultures, communities, etc. Paying attention to other people or things builds your concern or appreciation for them.⁴² 3. Read. Reading exposes you to characters, situations, interactions, and goals through stories which can improve your ability to understand people in the real world.⁴² 4. Use cultural understanding to guide you in promoting connection through behaviors such as eye contact.⁴² 5. Find similarities. When speaking with individuals, build on what you have in common, such as a shared goal, instead of focusing on differences.⁴² 6. Ask open-ended questions. Nod to encourage elaboration.⁴² 7. Understand areas of empathy that may be difficult for you and confront them through reflection and practice.⁴² 8. Refrain from assumptions and seek understanding.⁴²
<p>Full Presence</p> <p><i>Able and willing to deeply engage with life; a whole body way of being⁴³</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects with the vitality and wisdom inherent in who they are • Is completely in the moment with something or someone • Experiences all the feelings of a moment • Shows gratitude⁴³ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage in every aspect of an activity. Pay attention to what you see, smell, hear, taste, and touch. Take note of the verbal and nonverbal cues of those around you.⁴⁴ 2. See the importance of what you are doing. Set an intention and state why the activity is necessary. Give the activity meaning.⁴⁴ 3. Accept what you do not know and embrace uncertainty and change as part of the human condition.⁴⁴ 4. Cultivate curiosity and ask open-ended questions to foster engagement, awareness, and presence.⁴⁵

FACILITATOR & DEFINITION	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY
<p>Honesty</p> <p><i>Free of deception and untruthfulness; sincere</i>⁴⁶</p> <p><i>A trait which has both behavioral and motivational components</i>⁴⁷</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates the truth even when uncomfortable • Trustworthy • Demonstrates integrity • Transparent • Reliable • Open • Authentic in interactions • Keeps promises and commitments⁴⁸ • Self-accepting⁴⁹ • Promotes meaning, trust, & relational connection⁴⁹ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on those you admire for their honesty. What do you strive to emulate about their approach?⁴⁷ 2. Build moral reminders of honesty into your day such as a daily reading or review of your personal values.⁴⁷ 3. Pay attention to situations or feelings when you are dishonest or have difficulty telling the truth. 4. Practice sharing the truth in appropriate ways even when it is uncomfortable. Start being honest in small situations and work up to bigger truths. 5. Reflect on the importance of honesty in your relationships.
<p>Humility</p> <p><i>A type of growth mindset representing a modest or low view of one's own importance</i>^{20,50}</p> <p><i>Comprised of 3 parts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Accurate self-perception · Modest self-portrayal · Other-oriented relational stance⁵¹ <p><i>Sub-types: general humility, intellectual humility, cultural humility, relational humility, spiritual humility, political humility etc.</i>⁵¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views others with appreciation⁵² • Aware of and aspiring towards something much greater than self⁵² • Teachable, seeks self-knowledge and continuous improvement to overcome shortcomings⁵² • Empathetic⁵³ • Easier to observe in others than in self⁵⁴ • Engages in self-reflection to assess for the presence of personal biases when working with culturally diverse individuals, groups, and communities⁵⁵ • Strives to be open and curious about the experiences and desires of others that come from and hold diverse perspectives⁵⁵ • Participates in lifelong learning to continuously develop and reinforce skills for working effectively and inclusively with diverse individuals, ideas, beliefs, practices, and desires⁵⁵ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build humility through external feedback. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Seek honest feedback from a trusted source in your life. Ask them how humble they perceive you to be and to identify areas for growth. b. Resist the temptation to be defensive as building humility requires openness to learning. Listen fully to the feedback you hear. Affirm yourself and embrace the process as an opportunity to learn and grow, appreciating that cultivating humility requires time as well as effort. c. Maintain a focus on empathy, as it is the key to humility and helps us break a pattern of self-focus and connect with others. Ask yourself: Why might other perspectives I am hearing be right? How would I respond if I treated the other person as if they were trying their very best?⁵³ 2. Questions to ponder and react to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Am I open to the views, beliefs, and opinions of others? b. Do I make assumptions about others, feel superior to others, or overvalue my knowledge and talents?⁵⁰ c. Am I willing to see myself truthfully, with a low self-focus? d. Is my perception of my place accurate? e. Am I able to acknowledge my mistakes and limitations? f. Do I appreciate the value of all things?⁵⁶ 3. Express gratitude to others. Think about the people who have influenced you positively in your life, appreciate their contribution, and verbalize or demonstrate your gratitude.⁵⁰
<p>Kindness</p> <p><i>Of a good or benevolent nature or disposition</i>⁵⁷</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly⁵⁸ • Generous⁵⁸ • Considerate⁵⁸ • Gentle⁵⁸ • Respectful⁵⁸ • Amiable⁵⁸ • Helpful⁵⁹ • Loving⁵⁹ • Does good for others⁵⁸ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reset your stress. Stress can hinder a desire to be kind and prevent you from offering words or acts of kindness. Engage in self-care by deep breathing, walking, and other activities. 2. Stop and pay attention to what is happening within and around you. Be mindful of how you are feeling, what you are thinking, and what is happening in the environment, without judgment. Being in tune with our emotions helps us to be more empathetic to others. 3. Purposefully create and savor opportunities for fostering positive emotion in others. Smile at people you pass on the street. Give someone a warm hug when you walk in the door. 4. Do favors for others, and thank others for their kindness.⁶⁰

FACILITATOR & DEFINITION	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY
<p>Love</p> <p><i>Feel or show deep affection or great care for⁶¹</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invests in the well-being of another⁶² • Desires for another to be happy and healthy⁶³ • Compassionate⁶³ • Caring⁶⁴ • Safe⁶⁴ • Comforting⁶⁴ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Focus on the good you see in others and want for others.⁶³ 2.What are you grateful for in others? Make a gratitude list and spend time each day embracing one or more items on your list. 3.Brainstorm how you can care more and do more for others (even in regular, everyday activities) and then intentionally build time into your schedule to complete these activities.⁶⁵ 4.Seize spontaneous or random opportunities to make someone happy or support their well-being in some way (e.g., spending quality time together, offering words of encouragement or appreciation, helping out in some way, lingering longer in a hug).⁶⁶
<p>Nonjudgment</p> <p><i>Avoids judgments based on one's own personal or moral standards⁶⁷</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values what others think even if they disagree • Respects individuals • Promotes feeling seen and heard • Open-minded • Does not let personal biases influence the treatment of others • Unconditional positive regard⁶⁸ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Observe and do not react. Observation may be enhanced by asking: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a.Am I judging based on appearances, someone else's opinion, or events of the past? b.Am I being biased? Do I have all of the information? c.Are my views or understanding of what's happening limited in any way? Consider compassionate explanations for why someone acted the way they did. d.Are my emotions clouding my judgment? 2.Put yourself in their shoes. Counter misjudgment or negative judgments with empathy. 3.Open your mind. Take a moment and listen to broaden your perspective and become more accepting of others. 4.Stimulate your brain/create new insights in your conversations.⁶⁹
<p>Nurturance</p> <p><i>Caring for and encouraging the growth and development of others⁷⁰</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for learning, safety, and security • Notices, understands, and responds to signals in a timely and appropriate manner • Recognizes that every interaction or absence of an interaction contributes to a foundation for learning • Provides safe and secure environments (physical, emotional, and environmental safety, access to food and water)⁷¹ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Offer kind, constant, and honest communication. 2.Be willing to work through difficulties and disagreements. 3.Share feelings and thoughts. 4.Offer emotional support, validation, and sincere compliments. 5.Practice compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness. 6.Embrace and discuss mistakes.⁷²
<p>Patience</p> <p><i>The propensity to wait calmly in the face of frustration, adversity, or suffering⁷³</i></p> <p><i>Depends on both behavioral (i.e., waiting) and emotional (i.e., low arousal) factors</i></p> <p><i>Must be aware of and accept impatience first before it can transform⁷⁴</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow to anger⁷⁵ • Active listener⁷⁵ • Seeks understanding⁷⁵ • Thoughtfully chooses words and actions⁷⁵ • Exudes calm when delayed or hindered⁷⁵ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Practice patience by practicing mindfulness. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a.Focus on the present moment and recognize when impatience surfaces, without judgment. b.Get curious about the experience. What are my common triggers that test my patience? Are my expectations out of sync with reality? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i.Am I expecting the environment or others to conform to my expectations? ii.Are my expectations for myself realistic? iii.Are my thoughts and feelings realistic?⁷⁴ 2.Allow yourself to feel impatient to promote acceptance. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a.When impatient, how do my mind/body feel? 3.Practice transforming impatience into patience. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a.Notice you are impatient. b.Pay attention to how that feels. c.Ask yourself: "Is there anything I can do to change the situation without making matters worse for myself or others?"

FACILITATOR & DEFINITION	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY
		<p>i. If not, make a choice backed up with effort to pay attention to everything that's going on around you and find something that arouses your curiosity or interest.</p> <p>4. Ask yourself: Can I hold unwelcome thoughts or emotions more lightly, maybe even with humor?</p> <p>5. When you come face to face with impatience, tell yourself, "No problem". Calmly accept the presence of impatience knowing that conditions will change over time – and so will your mind.⁷⁴</p>
<p>Respect</p> <p><i>Feeling or showing deference, admiration, or due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others.</i>⁷⁶</p> <p><i>Also includes respect for self, environment, situation, and things.</i>⁷⁷</p> <p><i>Can be a behavior, attitude, or feeling that may or may not be expressed in the behavior.</i>⁷⁷</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats others with dignity, which is the inherent value and worth of a person. Dignity is not earned. Rather, it is an intrinsic part of being human. • Values others' opinions • Acknowledges the rights, feelings, and perspectives of others • Actively listens • Demonstrates accountability – acknowledges mistakes and genuinely apologizes • Inclusive⁷⁸ 	<p>General ways to cultivate respect:</p> <p>1. Listening: Practice being genuinely interested in and open to what others share with you. Seek to understand others' experiences, ideas, and perspectives even if you do not agree with them or choose something different.</p> <p>2. Acting: Speak with and show respect. Reflect on a recent moment of discomfort or tension with someone. Ask yourself: How could I have tapped into respect through my actions or words to resolve that disagreement, conflict, or tension?</p> <p>3. Showing: Create a culture of respect. Seek to understand the perspectives of others and how respect is given and received in other cultures and groups of those you encounter. Exhibit an appreciation for the knowledge, skills, and abilities of others.</p> <p>a. Communicate in ways that show regard for others.</p> <p>b. Take concerns seriously, empathize, and genuinely apologize if you hurt someone.⁷⁹</p>
<p>Self-Awareness</p> <p><i>Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions.</i>⁸⁰</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprised of two types: internal and external⁸¹ • Understands one's values, preferences, resources, goals, and intuitions, & how they change over time⁸⁰ • Notes sensations, thoughts, and emotions as they occur⁸² • Is promoted by an understanding of 1) one's beliefs, values, thoughts, feelings, physiological responses, personality traits, and motivations, and 2) others' perceptions⁸³ • Knows who they are⁸¹ • Seeks out and values opinions from people who are willing to tell them the truth and have their best interests in mind⁸¹ 	<p>1. Start a log of your thoughts. Document the thoughts that pop up as automatic reactions to experiences.</p> <p>a. Describe what was happening at the time (internally with your thoughts and feelings as well as externally).</p> <p>b. Note your level of emotion.</p> <p>c. If able, note the underlying reason for the emotion.</p> <p>2. Practice the capacity to be present and to notice without judgment your internal experiences.</p> <p>3. Ask someone you trust who also has your best interests in mind to share what they see as your strengths and development areas.⁸⁴</p>
<p>Self-Acceptance</p> <p><i>Complete acceptance of one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions.</i>⁸⁵</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to acknowledge and accept one's feelings, values, and other aspects of the self⁸⁵ • Receptive and open to oneself⁸⁵ • Meets one's experiences as they are without trying to change them⁸⁵ • Requires self-awareness⁸⁶ 	<p>1. Practice self-regulation.</p> <p>a. Recognize, reframe, and redirect negative emotions (self-hatred, self-doubt, etc.).</p> <p>b. Refocus on the positive aspects of yourself.</p> <p>c. Reframe negative situations in a way that highlights the opportunities within them.</p> <p>2. Brainstorm ways you can contribute to your family, work, or community to promote an "unforced" sense of connectedness with the world.</p> <p>3. Consciously make an effort to engage with an experience, system, or person in an authentic way.⁸⁶</p>

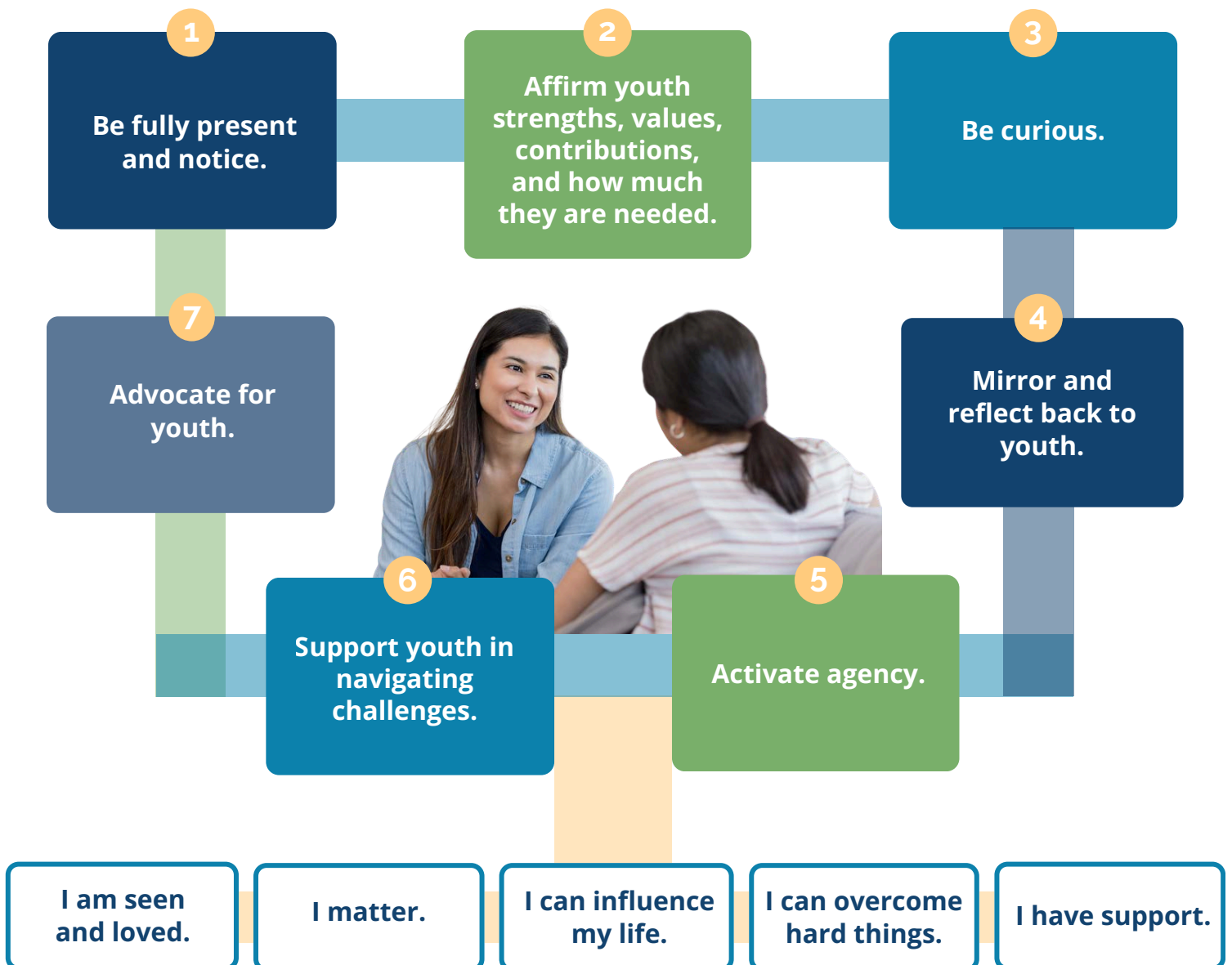
FACILITATOR & DEFINITION	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY
<p>Self-Alignment</p> <p><i>Behaving in ways that are consistent with one's internal states, preference, resources, and intuitions⁸⁵</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts in ways that authentically reflect oneself • Demonstrates one's values and priorities in their lives through their behaviors, including the way they treat people, take care of themselves, and manage situations⁸⁵ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a list of your values and highest priorities in life. 2. Reflect on your behaviors & activities over the past week. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did your behaviors and activities align with your lists of values and highest priorities? b. For those that did not, did they draw out a value or priority you need to add to your list? Ask yourself: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Is continuing this behavior enhancing my well-being? ii. What is the opportunity cost by me continuing this behavior? 3. Brief exercise: At any moment in time, pause and ask yourself "Am I feeling connected right now"? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Am I focused on this connection? b. Is this connection meaningful to me? c. Is this connection consistent with my goals and values?⁸⁷
<p>Vulnerability</p> <p><i>Authentic and intentional willingness to be open to uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure in social situations in spite of fears.⁸⁸</i></p> <p><i>This toolkit focuses on elements that ultimately promote well-being. Therefore, vulnerability in this context is defined and presented as the kind of vulnerability one can choose to participate in as opposed to the kind which is not within our control.⁸⁹</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the interplay of vulnerability with unpleasant feelings (i.e., sadness, shame, helplessness, anger, embarrassment, disappointment, frustration) and chooses to tolerate, experience, move through, and express these feelings⁸⁹ • Engages in activities one might enjoy even when hesitant to do so⁸⁹ • Allows self to share important personal history elements when appropriate to develop deeper emotional connections⁸⁹ • Open⁹⁰ • Honest⁹⁰ • Trusting⁹⁰ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Become more self-aware (see exercises above for Self-Aware).⁹⁰ 2. Cultivate courage. Ask yourself: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Do I have the strength and courage to be vulnerable? b. How can I be more open with myself and others? c. How can I be more authentic in my relationships or activities? 3. Dare to be your most authentic self, fully aware of your strengths, skills, and gifts - as well as your flaws and insecurities. Understand fear and criticism will always be possible. Put language to your fears, insecurities, or doubts and embrace and face them head on. Stand up to negative forces or hindrances. 4. Practice confidence in your authentic self.⁹⁰ Know you have what it takes to overcome what you may face. 5. Seek to excel and not to perfect. Focus on realizing excellence in every opportunity to be vulnerable. Did you bring forward the best version of yourself despite having flaws?⁹⁰ 6. Practice, practice, practice.⁹⁰

3. Engage micro-skills.

What intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?

Trusted adult engagement of micro-skills is the third strategy in a health-promoting relationship way of *being*. Micro-skills in trusted adults refer to concrete words and actions that strengthen connection and cultivate or reinforce protective beliefs in youth. This section describes seven micro-skills, which when combined with meaningful connection, can cultivate the protective belief system and create the foundation for youth to be more receptive to skill development (to be discussed in the next section). The micro-skills and their descriptions are listed here followed by a table which highlights specific actions or steps trusted adults can take.

The timing and intensity of employing these skills depends on your role in the youth's life, the context of your relationship with them, the nature of the interaction, and the youth's individual preferences. It is up to you to determine the pace or depth in which you use the micro-skills. As always, maintaining an HPR mindset will help micro-skills reach their full potential, as you will be ready, willing, able, and motivated to always engage them in appropriate and authentic ways when opportunities present themselves.



3. Engage micro-skills. (#1)

What intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?

The table ahead provides ideas on how to put each micro-skill into practice through your actions (Actions to Implement) and your words (Example Statements & Questions). As you review the micro-skills, we encourage you to identify the behaviors and language that feel authentic to you within each micro-skill area, and to generate additional ideas that fit the unique needs and context of the youth you work with. Consider which facilitators of connection you may need to engage to support the application of each micro-skill.

As you review the micro-skills, actions and example verbal statements below, consider how you may or may not already practice each of the skills. Ask yourself:

1. What contexts support me in being more likely to use this micro-skill?
2. What works well in my application of each micro-skill?
3. What could I do more of, and what are my greatest opportunities for development?

In the Assessments section of this toolkit you will find a *Micro-Skills for Trusted Adults Self-Assessment*. This self-assessment provides an opportunity to reflect on your use of each micro-skill. As you complete it, notice where your strengths lie and where growth opportunities exist. Your results can guide you in creating a plan to develop your micro-skills with youth intentionally. We encourage you to repeat the self-assessment periodically (e.g. quarterly) to measure your progress and growth over time.

MICRO-SKILL #1

Be fully present and notice.⁹¹⁻⁹⁴

Commit to being fully in the moment and conveying attentiveness towards youth. Full presence requires you to let go of the impulse to teach, fix, advise, or remind; to let go of distractions both external and internal; to keep yourself from focusing even on what you might want to say in response to youth while they are still finishing speaking. To do this well, it is important to be aware of your internal state. Pausing between moments can be helpful as those pauses enable you to arrive at a calmer place; to reduce the internal “noise” that distracts you.

Full presence involves offering meaningful attention. As you are in the moment with youth, you are listening for strengths, listening for the details of their lives, seeking to understand struggles they may be having, and learning more about the environment they are navigating. Allowing yourself to be fully present facilitates your ability to truly see and hear youth and to meet them where they are at. Full presence is a gift to yourself and to the youth because it enhances the quality of your interactions with youth, often increasing the bi-directional experience of connection and of being valued. These facilitators of connection are foundational to cultivating belonging and relational development.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Focus** all attention on youth in the present moment.
- **Let go** of competing priorities and distractions. They will be there when you are done.
- **Relax** the urge to teach, fix, advise, or remind.
- **Scan** for details, strengths or successes, struggles and other elements of what the youth is experiencing or contemplating.
- **Notice** the youth in a way that communicates back to the youth that you truly see them for who they are, care about the details of their lives, and miss them when they are not around.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- “Nothing else is more important to me right now than this time with you.”
- “I’ve turned off distractions so I can really be with you.”
- “I’m listening and I really want to understand.”
- “I trust your perspective – help me see the world through your eyes.”
- “You deserve to be heard, fully and without judgment.”
- “Last week you were going to do [name event] – you seemed [state emotion] about it. How did it go?”
- “Your perspective is really important. What do you think?”
- “I wanted to check in – I noticed you seem a little off today. What’s going on?”
- “I missed seeing you yesterday! How is that project going? How is your mom feeling?”
- “How’ve you been doing lately? How has your energy been?”
- You are such an important part of this community and we value you being here!”

3. Engage micro-skills. (#2)

What intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?

MICRO-SKILL #2 | Affirm youth strengths, values, contributions, and how much they are needed. ⁹⁵⁻¹⁰¹

Many of us whose profession involves working with youth chose to do so because we believe in youth. We see their strengths. In fact, at the center of youth development models is the concept of “strengths based.” Affirmations are expressions that recognize a positive aspect or strength and are considered a core strategy for a strengths based approach.

There are two common missed opportunities in using affirmations. First, we often do not do as many as we could. Within the course of a 15-minute interaction with a youth, there is likely the opportunity to offer three affirmations. Yet, we often only vocalize one. Second, we are not as purposeful in our affirmations as we could be. Affirmations are derived from the Latin origin *affirmare* which means “to fix firmly, make steadfast, establish, confirm, assert.” Thus, when we offer affirmations, we are promoting (or reinforcing) a positive mindset, inspiring growth and building resilience. When we affirm, we have the opportunity to recognize not only a youth’s actions and choices but their values, internal strengths, capabilities, contributions and goals. **Meaningful, genuine affirmations convey not only acceptance and kindness but also a belief in youth that is essential to their development and promotes self-worth, self-confidence, and motivation.**

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Listen** for strengths within youth that may be expressed as actions, attitudes, knowledge, understanding, feelings, goals, and values.
- **Reframe** your observations in relation to youth’s development as well as their goals and values if not expressly stated.
- **Keep** the affirmations all about the youth vs. inserting yourself in any way (e.g. “I think that you....” vs. “You”)
- **Ground** affirmations in what is authentic and true within your style and your given interactions with specific youth.
- **Praise** effort, strategies, and growth (not just outcomes).
- **Express** to youth they matter to you, how you miss them when they are not present, and the ways it is better when they are around.
- **Remind** youth how you and others/organization need and rely on them and their contributions.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- Examples of conveying appreciation while highlighting unique gifts:
 - “You are always looking out for your friends. It’s really great to see how caring you are.”
 - “You have been practicing so hard for your upcoming concert. Its clear music is important to you, and you care about doing well. That is awesome to see!”
- Examples of reflecting the impact of youth’s efforts:
 - “It was so great how you were with everyone there today. You really offered some great ideas and energy to get the group moving forward in a solid direction.”
 - “You were so positive during the game today and it really boosted the energy across the whole team. You showed great leadership in that way!”
 - “You will get through this. You have faced harder things before, and your thoughtful approach really helped.”
- Examples of describing youth’s impact before asking them to do something:
 - “We really need your perspective. You offer so much to this group. It wouldn’t be the same without you. Thank you for doing all that you are doing. It means a lot.”
 - “The seniors always love seeing people your age. It really brings them such joy. Would you be willing to come to the cafeteria for the senior day lunch next week?”
- Examples of building a sense of mattering in youth:
 - “You matter to me. I’m so grateful for you.”
 - “I look forward to seeing you each week.”
 - “It’s better when you are around!”
 - “Would you mind helping with this? Your contributions always make an impact on what we are trying to do.”
 - “It is so neat to watch you set a goal, work through any challenges, make such a significant impact, and celebrate achieving it! I admire your determination!”
 - “You have such a healthy perspective and positive attitude. You keep showing up and doing what you need to do. That is going to go a long way. I believe in you and know you will reach your goals!”
 - “You did not want to leave that party to be home on time and you still did it and respected your curfew. That says a lot about the love and respect you show your parents. I bet they really appreciate that.”

3. Engage micro-skills. (#3 and #4)

What intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?

MICRO-SKILL #3

Be curious.

Curiosity within the HPR paradigm involves trusted adults' desire, capacity, and openness to know youth in a genuinely deep and purposeful way. It involves not only eliciting the details of youths' lives but going further to ask and listen for youths' perspective, thoughts, feelings, purpose, values, and goals. We can ask about how a youth's day went but we want to go beyond to understand what is important to them and why. Often, curiosity requires us to engage in perspective taking and to let go of our schemas or pre-existing frameworks, our assumptions, and our past experiences in similar situations. In essence, its understanding that what we know does not always serve us well. Curiosity further requires us to avoid responding with feedback or solutions and rather ask one more deeper, open-ended question that gets a youths' internal experience. At the root of curiosity is growth which can help to increase empathy, promote closeness, elicit reciprocal interest, and strengthen relationships. In this context, for youth, this growth occurs not only in relation to one another but also promotes growth in oneself.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Draw out** youth's perspectives, thoughts, feelings, purpose, values and goals.
- **Put aside** your schemas, assumptions, and past experiences to increase your readiness and ability to be curious.
- **Engage** in perspective taking.
- **Ask** deep and purposeful open-ended questions.
- **Avoid** responding to youths' sharing with feedback, solutions, or even self-disclosure of similar experiences.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- "I wonder how you have thought through that and any insights you might have."
- "Hmm. Let me try on your perspective, as you made some really valid points."
- "What you said really resonated with me. Can you tell me more about what you learned and what really struck you about it?"
- "Wow. I had that all wrong and should not have made an assumption. Thank you for helping me understand it."

MICRO-SKILL #4

Mirror and reflect back to youth.

Mirroring is stating back to youth in conversations parts of what they have shared with the goal of enhancing their self-awareness and conveying that you are listening; that you see and hear them. Reflections include using observations from conversations with youth, youth actions, and other elements of youths' lives, highlighting their values and goals, and potentially how their choices align (or don't) with those values and goals. Purposeful mirroring and reflection occurs when trusted adults offer back to youth reflections designed to promote self-awareness, an essential ingredient for reaching one's full potential. Reflections go further than self-awareness to help youth feel valued and when reflections are conveyed with nonjudgment, youth experience acceptance which leads to feelings of trust and safety.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Listen** and observe deeply with full presence to understand the true essence of what youth are expressing and sharing.
- **Choose** what to reflect with the purpose of youth feel seen and heard AND to foster their own self-awareness and growth.
- **Offer** reflective statements to youth often.
- **Convey** acceptance and nonjudgment when offering reflections.
- **Receive** any reaction to your reflections as information and an opportunity to deepen connection, even if it's a signal you may not have fully understood the youth.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- Examples of reflecting values: "Standing up for the people you care about is a core value for you.", "Honesty and dependability are big ones for you - you want to know where you stand with people and that you can count on them."
- Example of a reflection connecting values and goals: "You want to be able to get along with people better - to not react with anger. Having people be honest with you. Given honesty is one of your core values, having people be honest with you will help you get feedback on how you are doing."

3. Engage micro-skills. (#5)

What intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?

MICRO-SKILL #5

Activate agency.¹⁰²⁻¹⁰³

At its deepest roots, agency is about personal freedom and hope. A person's belief and experience in their ability to exert power over their own life, to make decisions and act independently to bring about change in their life has so many benefits but most of all, it connects to an enduring ability to envision a better future. When youth experience self-agency, they benefit from increases in independence, confidence, positive self-regard through a deeper understanding of one's own motivations and values, and resilience. In addition, with self-agency comes the ability to form healthier relationships as one learns to set and communicate boundaries and expectations.

Activating agency involves honoring someone's autonomy in making choices for themselves and demonstrating faith in their ability to do so. This can be achieved in part by stopping ourselves from giving solutions to youth and instead, drawing out from them possible next steps or approaches to a given situation or goal. When youth are struggling to voice their own ideas for a course of action, one common approach in working with youth that honors their autonomy and promotes agency is to provide a "menu of options" after asking an open-ended question. If you ask a youth an open-ended question and they respond with "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" or "What do you mean?", you can offer a range of possible options or responses. For example, you may ask a youth "What values are most important to you?" and they respond with "What do you mean?" You can follow up by showing them a list of values and ask them to pick up to five values that they feel are true for them.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Empower** youth's sense of their strengths and skills.
- **Ask** youth for their thoughts, ideas, solutions and next steps.
- **Create** opportunities for youth to lead and to exercise their freedom.
- **Avoid** initially and direction offering advice or solutions in a way where you could be seen as "taking charge."
- **Exercise patience** – give youth the space and time to identify and arrive at their own solutions or ideas about a course of action.
- **Express** confidence in youths' ability to make their own decisions, act independently and set boundaries for themselves.
- **Normalize** that sometimes it takes more than one try. Having things not work out is not failure but rather learning more about what does and does not work.
- **Offer** meaningful choices.
- **Believe** in youth's potential.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- "Ultimately, it's your choice."
- "What do you want to do about this situation?", "What do you think might help?"
- "What good things do you think would happen from taking that step?", "What not-so-good things might happen from taking that step?"
- Example of Ask-Offer-Ask: Ask permission: "Can I share another idea you might think about?", Offer idea: "I was wondering if it might help if you set your alarm across the room so you had to get out of bed to turn it off.", Ask youth's reaction: "What are your thoughts about that?"
- "Let's brainstorm as many solutions as you can think of. We can look at each one and based on which ones you choose, we can create an action plan of the next steps you want to take. I'm here to ask some questions and to offer ideas and be a resource if you get stuck. You know yourself best. What do you know works for you to help you feel healthier and centered?"
- "What activities do you think we could do that feel in line with your goals?"
- "It's so important that you are involved in as many decisions as possible. Each time we have choices to make, when we can, we want to involve you, get your input and have you make the decision."
- Example of offering choices: "You have a few options. You could get involved in this fight between your two friends by taking a side, you could totally avoid it, or you could let them both know that you care about them, you hope they can resolve it, and that you aren't going to take sides. What do you think?"
- "Congratulations! What you just did is so awesome. I hope you feel proud of yourself."
- "You can do this."
- "Believe in yourself. We believe in you and are confident you can achieve whatever you set your mind to!"
- "You are ready and capable to achieve this."

3. Engage micro-skills. (#6 and #7)

What intentional words or actions am I using with youth to cultivate protective beliefs?

MICRO-SKILL #6

Support youth in navigating challenges.¹⁰⁴

Youth's ability to make our way through, to steer a course of action is the process of navigation. Navigation is complex as it involves two parts: 1) the process of accurately knowing and understanding one's position and 2) using that understanding to plan and follow a route. This becomes more complex when youth are wrestling with challenges, tough decisions, and hard problems. As trusted adults, we can help youth to successfully navigate those challenges in a way that honors their autonomy, as discussed above, while ensuring they feel supported and encouraged. In the face of these challenges, we as trusted adults can guide youth by guiding the youth through these key processes below.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Increase** youth's understanding of what the challenge is and how it is affecting them.
- **Partner** with youth to support them to identify their own solutions and steps.
- **Normalize** that we all have problems and navigating them is not easy.
- **Show compassion** towards youth, including conveying the idea of self-compassion.
- **Support** youth to **Build** and **Seek** out support.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- "You are not alone. As much as it doesn't seem like it at times, everyone has problems. Figuring out how to navigate our problems doesn't mean we get to be problem-free. It means that we have better ways of figuring out how to solve those problems without feeling stuck or getting as upset as we used to."
- "You are in such a tough spot. It makes sense that you would feel this way."
- "Who would you feel comfortable asking for help?"
- "Let's slow down, take a few deep breaths, and take a step back from it. Would taking a walk around the block help?"
- "This won't last forever and once you are through it, you will feel so relieved."
- "When things are difficult, try not to be hard on yourself. It's so important for you to be patient with yourself and others, show yourself some kindness and understanding. Try to treat yourself the same way you would treat your best friend."
- "You don't have to do this alone. Everyone needs help sometimes or someone to stand by their side. I'm here for you in whatever way you need."

MICRO-SKILL #7

Advocate for youth.

At times, it is natural for youth to want, need, and benefit from advocates – champions in their corner. Advocating for youth requires us to assess and determine when we need to step in to support, back, represent, or argue on behalf of youth. Asking youth whether they desire support and what they want such support to look like continues to honor their own agency. For ourselves, we too need to be able to have a strong sense of how much support is needed, providing a balance of just enough support so the youth feels that they have a champion in their corner while simultaneously feeling empowered in their own abilities and skills.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

- **Explore** and honor youths' thoughts, ideas, and wishes for support and advocacy.
- **Balance** the degree of support and backing you provide youth so as to ensure youth continue to feel empowered.
- **Invite** youth to offer feedback after advocating on their behalf. Listen and let youth know you appreciate their perspective.
- **Normalize** challenges and reframe setbacks: "Hard things happen to everyone – it's how we respond that builds strength" or "This feels tough right now and you have made it through similar things before."
- **Connect** them with people, places, information, resources, and/or opportunities that will support their goals or ability to thrive.

EXAMPLE STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

- "How are you feeling about addressing this issue on your own?"
- "At what point, if any, might you want some additional support?" Followed by "What would that look like?"
- "How do you feel that support would be helpful compared to you trying to resolve it on your own?"

Additional Considerations

The Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm offers a way of thinking about the full potential of relationships and how trusted adults can maximize their relationships with youth to help them thrive and flourish. The paradigm acknowledges that relationships do not exist in isolation, that there are multiple influences on youth at any given time, and that youth come from varied backgrounds (as do trusted adults). We also acknowledge that substance use prevention is a primary outcome of health-promoting relationships, and conversations about substance use or other risky behaviors may naturally arise when trusted adults engage with youth.

It is essential that trusted adults feel ready to address substances and other risk-related conversations. To navigate these conversations most effectively, adults can proactively prepare themselves with knowledge about adolescent development, effective communication strategies, and awareness of local resources for referrals when professional help may be needed.^{101,105}

Start by approaching risk-related conversations with empathy, curiosity, and a focus on understanding the youth's perspective rather than judgment. These discussions should reinforce safety, trust, and the youth's strengths and potential, rather than focusing solely on consequences or discipline. Youth are more likely to continue to engage your support and be receptive to advice when they feel respected, supported, and genuinely heard.¹⁰⁶ It is also essential to normalize asking for help and to reassure youth that seeking support is a sign of strength.

Creating a plan or protocol for handling disclosures of risky behavior such as substance use can help adults feel more confident and reduce the chance of reacting with surprise or alarm. These situations, while sometimes challenging, can be pivotal teachable moments to affirm youth autonomy, provide guidance, and reinforce healthy decision-making.¹⁰⁷ By remaining calm, supportive, and informed, adults can connect youth with appropriate resources and turn difficult conversations into meaningful opportunities for growth and connection.



4. Develop skills in youth.

How am I seizing or creating opportunities for youth to learn or practice skills that build or reinforce protective beliefs?

Skills are learned abilities that “enable” youth to respond positively and resourcefully to the expectations and challenges of everyday life.^{108,109} They play a powerful role in shaping and strengthening the core protective belief system (I am seen and loved, I matter, I can influence my life, I can overcome hard things, and I have support.) and achieving well-being. This is why developing skills in youth is the fourth and final strategy in the HPR way of being.

As described earlier in the *Protective Beliefs* section, beliefs may waver over time with life experiences, particularly during difficult or challenging situations. Accessing and using their own skills as tools enables youth to strengthen their protective beliefs by building their capacity and engaging their sense of agency to influence their life, which in turn shapes what they believe about themselves. Just as adults can shape youth beliefs through the environment, connection, and words and actions, youth can also engage their own tools (skills!) to strengthen protective beliefs and thrive amidst the demands of life.^{110,111}

Trusted adults are uniquely positioned to support youth in learning, practicing, and refining life-long skills that cultivate protective beliefs. They can serve as role models of the skills (youth are always watching), provide coaching, and encourage youth throughout stages of skill development. The goal is to help youth 1) **understand how these skills connect to their values, goals, and well-being** and 2) **know when and how to use the skills in real-life situations**. When youth make these connections, the skills feel meaningful to youth, and protective beliefs are strengthened.

Important note: The strongest mechanism linking skills to protective beliefs is when youth can **successfully demonstrate the skills and ultimately master them**. These direct successes provide the most authentic evidence to support capability and the protective beliefs “I can influence my life, and I matter.”, far outweighing other influences like observing others or receiving encouragement.¹¹²

Skill development requires trusted adults to be available, able, motivated, and willing to teach something new. This is a critical part of the HPR mindset, as intentionally making time during busy schedules AND taking advantage of spontaneous opportunities with youth nudge trusted adults to stretch with purpose and forego competing priorities or desires to make those moments with youth really count. Knowing when the timing is right to introduce, practice, or review a skill with youth is important. When in doubt, simply ask the youth if they are interested in learning something new. Connect the skill to their values, goals, or sense of purpose when possible. This helps the skill feel relevant and meaningful, increasing their motivation and openness to your guidance.

The sections on the following pages provide practical considerations to help you build your readiness and confidence to support youth skill development, **enabling you to act when the opportunity arises**.

It can be tempting to step in and solve things for youth. But when we take the time to teach through modeling, guiding, and practicing together, the impact is more lasting. We not only empower youth with new tools, but we also allow them to experience a sense of accomplishment and capability in having learned something new, which in turn can reinforce the protective beliefs.

4. Develop skills in youth. (cont.)

How am I seizing or creating opportunities for youth to learn or practice skills that build or reinforce protective beliefs?

SKILLS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The seven skills below cultivate the five core protective beliefs by buffering against risk and building protective and flourishing factors.

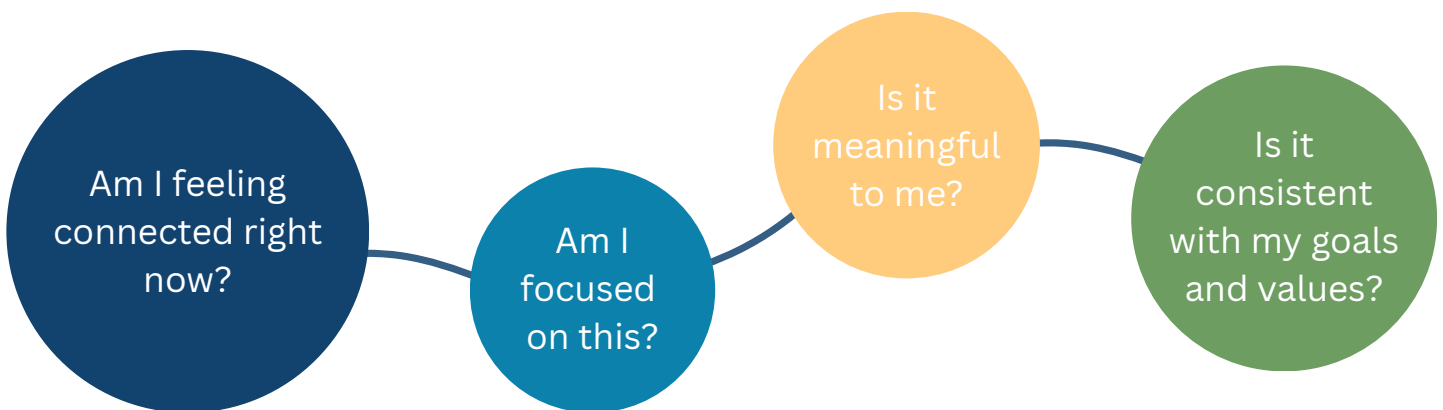


Meaning, purpose, and identity development all play a critical role in fostering development of the seven skills, as they represent a way of understanding one's own existence and self within any situation and in relation to others and the world. Therefore, they offer context, significance, and depth to skill development for youth. **Spirituality** as a protective factor naturally encompasses meaning, purpose, and identity development for many youth, and it can be engaged further as a resource (e.g. strength and hope) and/or tool (e.g. prayer) in skill development.

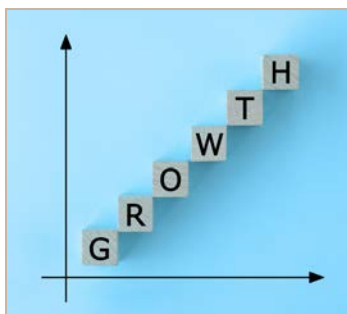
The table below offers a description of the seven skills along with ways to build them that can be learned and honed across life experiences.

Table: Skills for Youth to Cultivate Protective Beliefs

SKILL #1	WHY IT MATTERS
<p data-bbox="134 327 396 411">Practice self-alignment.</p> <p data-bbox="129 520 350 548">Beliefs Cultivated</p> <ul data-bbox="147 562 415 764" style="list-style-type: none"> • I am seen and loved (by self). • I matter (to myself, others, and a higher power). • I can influence my life. <p data-bbox="129 829 412 890">Supportive Facilitators of Connection</p> <ul data-bbox="147 911 339 1121" style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity • Honesty • Humility • Nonjudgment • Respect • Vulnerability 	<p data-bbox="467 260 1487 543">Self-alignment in a process of behaving in ways that are consistent with our internal states, preferences, resources, and values, and begins with awareness and acceptance of these aspects of ourselves. When youth develop a foundation of self-awareness and self-acceptance, they create the context that allows them to think and behave in ways that authentically reflect themselves (i.e., alignment). And when youth are more self-aligned, they are better able to manage their emotions, adapt to life’s challenges, make decisions that align with their values, build deeper and more authentic relationships, stay motivated when moving toward goals, and experience greater overall well-being.</p> <p data-bbox="477 575 834 606">WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL</p> <p data-bbox="467 644 786 672">Become more self-aware.</p> <ul data-bbox="485 688 1479 1041" style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice mindfulness by observing sensations, thoughts, and emotions without judgment. • Discover your core values. Try an online survey, review a list of common values, or ask others what values they see reflected in you. • Identify strengths and areas for growth. • Notice your ability to care for yourself and others. • Notice the value you bring to others and the world around you. • Identify the values and characteristics of the person you want to become. • Use reflective writing to pause and connect with your internal experiences. Try prompts such as, “What felt good today?” and “What led me to that choice?” <p data-bbox="467 1068 789 1096">Practice self-acceptance.</p> <ul data-bbox="485 1113 1479 1251" style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate the things you like about your current self. • Accept the things you want to change. • Practice self-compassion by noticing the present moment without judgment and treating yourself kindly, as you would a good friend. <p data-bbox="472 1283 1300 1314">Align your thoughts and behaviors with your priorities and values.⁸⁵</p> <ul data-bbox="490 1331 1446 1465" style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice using words that represent the person you want to be. • Practice behaving in ways that represent the person you want to be. • Practice prioritizing what you value in your <i>way of being</i> with others and in the decisions you make.



SKILL #2	WHY IT MATTERS
<p data-bbox="126 260 406 342">Practice a growth mindset.</p> <p data-bbox="126 470 350 499">Beliefs Cultivated</p> <ul data-bbox="147 512 393 630" style="list-style-type: none"> • I can influence my life. • I can overcome hard things. <p data-bbox="126 777 412 840">Supportive Facilitators of Connection</p> <ul data-bbox="147 858 277 959" style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Humility • Patience 	<p data-bbox="467 197 1477 483">A growth mindset is a way of thinking about one’s abilities and qualities (e.g., intelligence, talent) as malleable and capable of being developed through effort, practice, and input from others.¹¹⁵ Having a growth mindset empowers youth to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, and achieve their potential while enjoying and benefiting from the <i>process</i> of their pursuits (as opposed to outcomes). In teaching this skill, it is important to help youth understand that we all hold both fixed and growth mindsets, and the goal of practicing a growth mindset is to move closer to that way of thinking about oneself more regularly, and recognizing when our fixed mindsets are active and taking steps to shift toward a growth perspective.¹¹⁶</p> <p data-bbox="475 516 834 546">WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL</p> <ul data-bbox="483 590 1484 1547" style="list-style-type: none"> • Try on a growth mindset by telling yourself that you can always do better by working hard, trying out new tools to help you be successful, and asking others for feedback that supports your growth. • Embrace challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. Identify the strategies and tools you have used in the past that could support you now, and seek new resources when they are needed. • Come up with growth-mindset self-statements and practice using them in new and challenging situations (e.g., “I can do this”, “I may not be good at this...yet! But I can be!”, “Mistakes are OK, they help me learn.”) • Build hope by setting clear goals, mapping your path forward, and believing you can get there. • Manufacture HOPE: <ul data-bbox="524 1016 1445 1190" style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Remember you and others have already overcome many things. ◦ Challenge negative or hopeless thoughts with ones that represent a strong belief in 1) a path forward and out of the struggle, 2) your ability to find the path and pursue it, and 3) your ability to move forward AND still experience strong feelings about what has happened. • Visualize how your strengths and resources can carry you through hard times. • Celebrate your wins, big and small, by focusing on the effort you put into something, irrespective of the outcome. • Reframe setbacks as learning opportunities. Focus on what was learned in every experience and how that can be applied to future situations. • Find meaning in difficult situations by looking for how those moments are shaping who you are becoming. Consider what you learned about yourself (e.g., you were able to give your full effort, you honored your values even when it was hard to do so) and how it ultimately helped you. • Ask others for constructive feedback and humbly accept it.




Setbacks = Learning Opportunities!
Meaning = In what ways are my experiences shaping me towards the person I want to be?

SKILL #3	WHY IT MATTERS
<p data-bbox="131 285 407 321">Exercise agency.</p> <p data-bbox="131 474 347 501">Beliefs Cultivated</p> <ul data-bbox="147 516 391 659" style="list-style-type: none"> • I matter. • I can influence my life. • I can overcome hard things. <p data-bbox="131 783 412 842">Supportive Facilitators of Connection</p> <ul data-bbox="147 863 380 1073" style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity • Humility • Patience • Self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-alignment 	<p data-bbox="469 201 1495 485">Agency represents the capacity, capability, and willpower to influence one’s life and produce desired outcomes. It begins with self-awareness and grows as youth learn to make intentional choices, set meaningful goals, and take ownership of their actions and outcomes. As youth exercise their agency, they recognize their value, capability, and worth, and build confidence in their ability to shape their own life. Agency in youth is associated with improved problem-solving, decision-making, and persistence in the face of challenges.¹¹⁷ When youth develop a sense of agency, they also report better academic achievement, a stronger sense of purpose and meaning, and greater well-being.¹¹²</p> <p data-bbox="477 520 834 548">WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL</p> <ul data-bbox="485 590 1479 1226" style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore purpose by asking what you care about, what you feel called to contribute, and how you want to make a difference in your life, the lives of others, and the world around you. Translate these ideas into small, actionable steps. • Get curious! Explore different aspects of who you are (e.g., culture, interests, roles) and pursue new learning opportunities that align with what interests you or feels authentic or energizing. • Practice setting and working towards achievable goals that activate your strengths and align with your values. • Own your choices by acknowledging their impact, taking responsibility when things go wrong, and making things right when needed. • Reflect on your decisions to increase self-awareness and acknowledge growth. What worked? What didn’t? What would you do differently? • Find ways to show up for yourself and do things that remind you of your worth. • Seize or create opportunities to lead, mentor peers, or influence others in positive ways. • Practice using your voice by sharing your opinions, asking questions, and advocating for yourself in safe and supportive environments. • Seek out the people and resources that can help you move forward.


Belief #2

I matter.




Belief #3

I can influence my life.



Belief #4

I can overcome hard things.



SKILL #4	WHY IT MATTERS
<div data-bbox="126 264 357 344" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Make healthy choices.</h2> </div> <div data-bbox="126 470 350 499" data-label="Section-Header"> <h3>Beliefs Cultivated</h3> </div> <ul data-bbox="147 512 393 657" style="list-style-type: none"> • I matter. • I can influence my life. • I can overcome hard things. <div data-bbox="126 779 414 840" data-label="Section-Header"> <h3>Supportive Facilitators of Connection</h3> </div> <ul data-bbox="147 861 380 1144" style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity • Full presence • Nonjudgment • Patience • Self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-alignment • Vulnerability 	<p data-bbox="467 199 1502 451">Making healthy choices is the skill of thinking carefully before acting, attending to what truly supports one’s well-being, and making decisions that reflect both personal values and an awareness of consequences for self and others. Healthy choices extend to how youth care for themselves, advocate for their own needs, and access guidance when needed. As adolescence is a time of increasing independence that requires more complex decision-making, when youth learn to thoughtfully move through situations rather than react impulsively, they build a stronger sense of control, make more aligned decisions, and experience greater overall well-being.¹¹⁸</p> <div data-bbox="475 491 834 522" data-label="Section-Header"> <h3>WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL</h3> </div> <ul data-bbox="483 575 1474 1140" style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on your values and goals for your health and well-being. When making a choice, think critically. Ask yourself, “What are all of the possible ways forward? Does this choice align with what matters to me?” Afterwards, think about what you can do differently next time to better honor your values and support your health and well-being. • Intentionally take time to pause and reflect on your options before acting so your decisions are thoughtful, not impulsive. • Imagine the future you want, identify the steps to get there, and start taking action to make it possible. • Take care of your body and mind through sleep, nutrition, movement, and rest so that you can show up as your best self. • Use your voice to clearly express your needs, ask for support, and set boundaries, even when it feels uncomfortable. • Solve problems by carefully thinking through your options, weighing the consequences, and learning from the outcomes. • Seek input from trusted others when facing a difficult decision.

6 BASIC STEPS FOR DECISION MAKING

1. Identify the decision or problem.
2. Explore your options (include innovative ones!)
3. Weigh the pros and cons against your values.
4. Choose the best option.
5. Act on your decision.
6. Reflect on the outcome and adjust if needed.

GROW IN DISCERNMENT

Discernment is an intentional, reflective process applied to complex decisions to support making *wise* choices by distinguishing the truth from false information, considering motives, and aligning actions with positive, long-term values. Using discernment when making healthy choices helps youth build character, purpose, and wisdom. Try the following.

1. Reflect on what and who seem to influence your choices and behavior such as emotions, social media, peers, or spirituality.
2. When making complex decisions, thoughtfully consider the influences on the decision, anchor the decision in your values, and engage spiritual practices (such as prayer) and trusted adults in your life who can offer wisdom based on experience.
3. Reflect on how the choice has increased your own wisdom and prepared you for future decisions.

SKILL #5

Engage strategies to be well.

Beliefs Cultivated

- I am seen and loved.
- I matter.
- I can influence my life.
- I can overcome hard things.
- I have support.

Supportive Facilitators of Connection

- Authenticity
- Care
- Humility
- Kindness
- Nurturance
- Patience
- Self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-alignment
- Vulnerability



WHY IT MATTERS

Engaging strategies to be well is the skill of actively building and using the protective and flourishing strategies that support a youth in promoting and maintaining well-being for themselves. These strategies include personal growth and resilience, self-regulation, goal setting and motivation (covered earlier), and spirituality. Adolescence is a period of rapid development during which youth face many new and significant stressors, making their ability to effectively respond in ways that protect their well-being critical to their development. Therefore, proactively engaging tools that support youth to be well during moments of calm will prepare them to respond more effectively when the needed arises. Youth who are equipped with the strategies to be well demonstrate higher overall well-being, less substance use, and better mental and physical health following life's challenges.^{119–124}

WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL

Personal growth and resilience

- Search for meaning in experiences, especially challenges, by asking yourself, "What did this teach me about myself?" and "What matters most to me about this experience?"
- Focus your energy on what you can control and release what you cannot.
- Identify situations and influences that put you at risk and develop a plan for how to handle them.
- Trust your instincts when something doesn't feel right and remove yourself from the situation.
- Notice your strengths and identify how you can use them to navigate and overcome obstacles.
- Spend time describing to yourself the boundaries that protect your health and well-being and clearly communicate them to others.
- Recognize when peer pressure conflicts with your values and choose actions that align with your values and goals, even if it means saying no or stepping away.
- Practice assertive refusal so you're prepared to say no with confidence.
- Practice adjusting your plans when things don't go as expected.
- Take time to think through your options carefully, act on your values, and learn from every outcome.

Self-regulation

- Name what you're feeling and choose how to best respond to it.
- Pause and manage your emotions before reacting to a challenging situation.
- Identify negative thoughts and replace them with more accurate and helpful ones.
- Practice stress management techniques like breathing and relaxation skills.
- Take sensory breaks when feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated by moving to a calmer environment that allows you to engage a stress management technique until you feel ready to return.
- Nurture your body and mind so you have the energy and strength to recover and keep going.

Spirituality

- Explore what spirituality means to you, how it shapes your sense of identity, and how it can serve as a source of strength, hope, and guidance.
- Practice engaging spiritual and reflective practices (e.g., prayer, meditation, journaling) as tools for coping, decision-making, and navigating challenging experiences.
- Draw on your spiritual beliefs and practices to find strength and comfort when life is hard.
- Connect with faith-based organizations with shared values to build support and a sense of belonging.

SKILL #6	WHY IT MATTERS
<div data-bbox="138 262 332 346" style="background-color: #f9e79f; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Care about others.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="129 472 430 714" style="border: 1px solid #add8e6; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Beliefs Cultivated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I matter. (I can add value to the lives of others.) • I can influence my life. </div> <div data-bbox="129 756 430 1239" style="border: 1px solid #add8e6; padding: 10px;"> <p>Supportive Facilitators of Connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care • Empathy • Full presence • Honesty • Kindness • Love • Nonjudgment • Nurturance • Patience • Respect </div>	<p>Caring about others is the capacity to extend kindness, empathy, concern, and compassion toward others without expecting anything in return. As youth learn to understand and manage their own emotions, respect differences, and balance caring for others with caring for themselves, they strengthen their ability to form meaningful relationships. These qualities are represented in skills such as perspective-taking, gratitude, acts of kindness, and service. Youth who care about others are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior, contribute positively to their communities, develop stronger social connections, and experience greater social competence, psychological well-being, and reduced risk for problem behaviors.¹²⁵⁻¹²⁹</p> <div data-bbox="479 514 1521 567" style="background-color: #0072bc; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show curiosity and openness toward people with different backgrounds, identities, or viewpoints. • Put yourself in someone else's shoes to understand their feelings and perspective, even when you don't agree. • Treat others with the same kindness, respect, and compassion you would want for yourself. • Be fully present in conversations by listening and showing genuine interest, without interrupting, judging, or planning what to say next. • Show care through small, everyday actions that let others know they matter. • Practice gratitude for the people and experiences that bring meaning to and enrich your life. • Notice when someone is left out or being mistreated and take action to support them. • Apologize when you cause harm, take responsibility for your actions, and make efforts to repair the relationship. • Take on responsibilities at home, school, and in your community that support and benefit those around you. • Give back through volunteering or serving in ways that reflect your values and interests. • Set healthy boundaries by recognizing that caring does not mean overextending yourself or neglecting your own needs.



SKILL #7	WHY IT MATTERS
<p data-bbox="139 243 358 369">Connect with others and community.</p> <p data-bbox="131 470 350 499">Beliefs Cultivated</p> <ul data-bbox="147 512 350 573" style="list-style-type: none"> • I matter. • I have support. <p data-bbox="131 779 412 840">Supportive Facilitators of Connection</p> <ul data-bbox="147 863 331 1144" style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity • Care • Full presence • Honesty • Humility • Patience • Respect • Vulnerability 	<p data-bbox="472 201 1503 514">Connecting with others and the community is the skill of building and maintaining meaningful relationships and developing a sense of belonging. This requires the ability to communicate effectively, ask for what one needs, recognize and receive support from others, and form relationships. Human connection is a fundamental need and for youth in particular, feeling that they belong is a powerful protective factor.^{130,131} Youth who feel connected to others and their communities tend to have better mental health, be more engaged in school, and less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as substance use.^{131,132} Developing this skill equips youth not only to build supportive relationships, but to contribute meaningfully to the communities they are part of.</p> <p data-bbox="472 558 834 588">WAYS TO BUILD THIS SKILL</p> <ul data-bbox="483 632 1487 1192" style="list-style-type: none"> • Build communication skills by: <ul data-bbox="524 663 1230 766" style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Speaking up for yourself clearly, directly, and respectfully. ◦ Listening to understand, not just to respond. ◦ Receiving feedback with openness and curiosity. • Know what you need and practice putting it into words when asking for support. • Identify your support network and know who you can turn to for different kinds of help. • Build new relationships by seeking out people, groups, and spaces that reflect your interests and values. • Show up consistently for the people in your life and allow them to show up for you. • Find your place in the community by getting involved in causes that matter to you. • Actively participate in meaningful activities with others in your community (e.g., religious or civic engagement activities) that creates a sense of purpose and belonging. • Use your voice to advocate for yourself and others in your community.

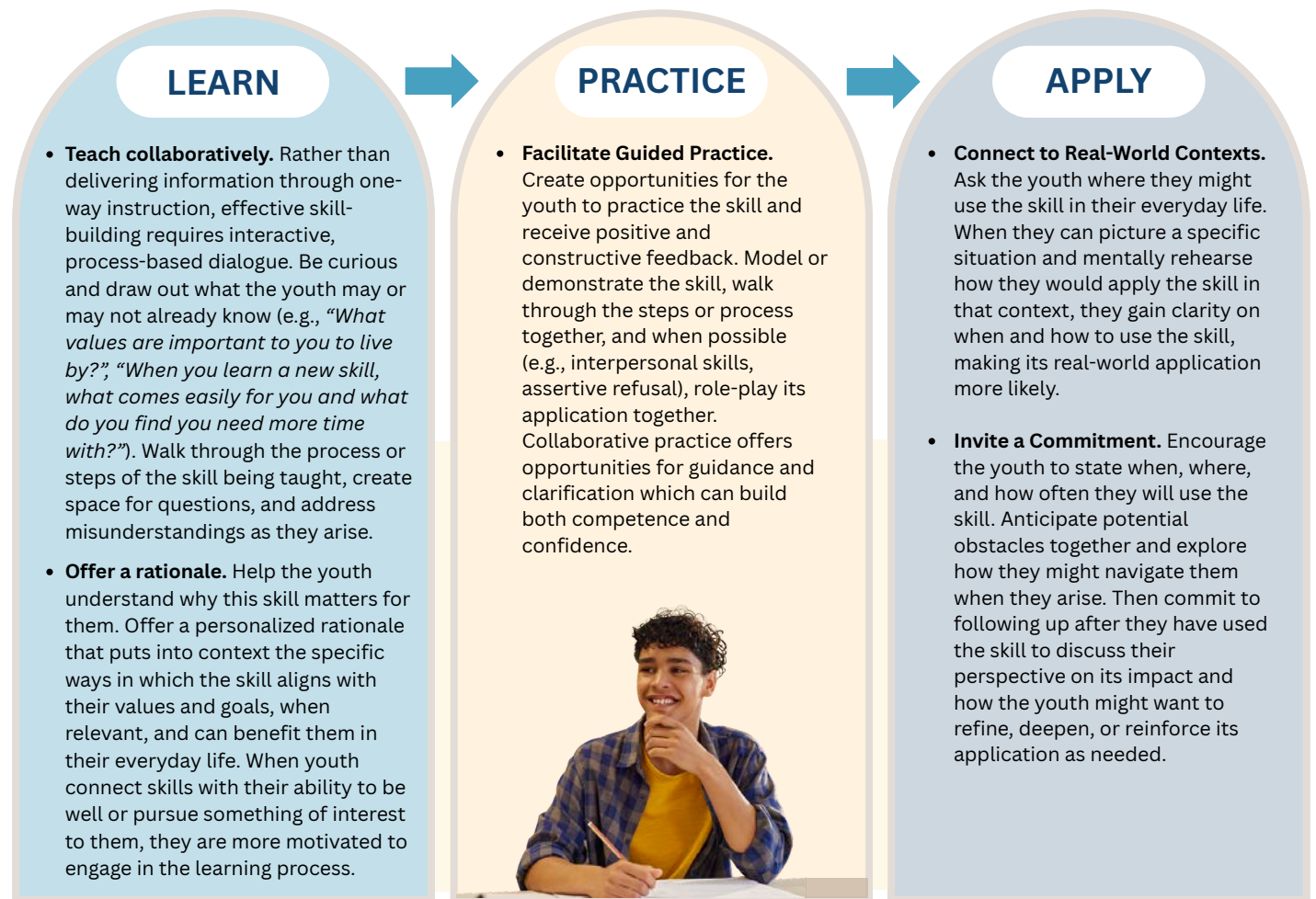


4. Develop skills in youth. (cont.)

How am I seizing or creating opportunities for youth to learn or practice skills that build or reinforce protective beliefs?

A THREE-STEP APPROACH FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The following three-step approach offers a path for guiding youth through the skill development process, from initial understanding to real-world application and refinement of a new skill.¹³ While the steps can be implemented in a sequential manner (and this may be most likely in planned moments), the steps can also be applied flexibly and over time, starting or re-engaging where needed to best fit the situation.



Remember to consider the youth’s natural abilities (i.e., strengths and talents they already possess) and propensities (i.e., inclinations or tendencies of the mind such as patience or curiosity) and tailor the approach to meet them where they are.

4. Develop skills in youth. (cont.)

How am I seizing or creating opportunities for youth to learn or practice skills that build or reinforce protective beliefs?

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities for skill development arise in two ways: organically through the course of everyday life and intentionally through planned moments. Both are valuable. The HPR mindset helps opportunities reach their full potential and not be missed.

Spontaneous Opportunities

Some of the most effective teaching happens in real time. When a youth encounters a situation that challenges them or makes choices that do not serve them well, teaching new skills in the moment to prevent or mitigate negative consequences, or support the youth in resolution of a challenge can increase the likelihood they will more actively engage in the learning process. Seizing opportunities for skill development in the moment also increases the likelihood of sincere appreciation of the skill. As you seek to see, know, and understand youth in deeper ways by using your facilitators of connection and micro-skills, you will naturally notice opportunities.

While many useful life skills can be taught to youth, skill development within the context of HPR focuses on those that help build and reinforce one or more of the five core protective beliefs.

Planned Opportunities

Frequently, trusted adults will want to plan for youth skill development before the skill is actually needed by the youth to provide time and structure for the youth to think through the concepts and to lay enough of a foundation of understanding and familiarity upon which the skill can then be practiced and honed. This may be especially useful for skills that are more complex or take more time to build. Intentionally setting aside time for skill development also communicates a powerful message to the youth: you have thought about their growth, made time for it, and care about their well-being.

Planning is also essential for trusted adults, as it gives them time to fully understand the skill, gather helpful resources, and practice it themselves before introducing it to youth.

Getting Started

- Ask the youth what skills are important to them to learn.
- Consider what skills are important to you to teach the youth and why (what beliefs, protective factors, values, and goals will they support in that youth?).
- Select two skills and plan opportunities (e.g., youth coalition meeting, family dinner, travel to an event, classroom activity) to discuss these skills with the youth.

Whether an opportunity is spontaneous or planned, skill development is most effective when it occurs within a relationship where the youth feels safe, seen, and genuinely supported.

4. Develop skills in youth. (cont.)

How am I seizing or creating opportunities for youth to learn or practice skills that build or reinforce protective beliefs?

While every skill included has value, some are more foundational to personal development and well-being, such as practicing self-alignment. When youth are more self-aligned, they have a clear sense of who they are and live in ways that authentically reflect their values, beliefs, and priorities in life. While not always easy, self-alignment yields a sense of peace and discernment that supports their ability to better manage their emotions, adapt to life's challenges, make decisions that align with their values, build deeper and more authentic relationships, stay motivated when moving toward goals, and experience greater overall well-being. Other foundational skills to consider include practicing a growth mindset and exercising agency.

ROLE MODELING AND GROWING TOGETHER

Youth learn a great deal by observing the adults around them. The ways we respond to difficult, unexpected, or challenging situations can (intentionally or not) be noticed, absorbed, and internalized by the youth in our lives.¹¹⁴ Because of this, as trusted adults, our own growth is foundational to the promotion of health and well-being in youth.

In the context of skill development, growth may begin with taking a moment to honestly reflect on which skills you as a trusted adult consistently apply well and where there may be room to grow. One of the most influential things we can do as trusted adults is to model the authenticity, honesty, vulnerability, and humility required to acknowledge our own areas for improvement and to share our own experiences with skill-building. Always take the opportunity to grow alongside youth, committing to building a skill together and checking in with one another about how the process is going. Because the youth have chosen you as a trusted adult in their lives, they care about what you think, so learning and growing together will be meaningful for them (and hopefully you, too!) and will normalize the idea that growth is always possible and a natural lifelong human process.

Trusted adults who are committed to engaging the HPR *way of being* will naturally model facilitators of connection and micro-skills through their interactions with youth. For any given skill, certain facilitators of connection are also important to engage to effectively use the skill, and these facilitators have been identified for each skill in a "Supportive Facilitators of Connection" section. Highlighting the specific facilitators for youth and supporting their ability to engage them will set youth up for success in skill development.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS TO SUPPORT SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Context matters when fostering the development of protective skills. The linguistic, developmental, cultural, and other relevant characteristics of the youth you work with can help you determine which skills are appropriate and where adaptation may be needed. We all vary in our preferences, capacity, and expectations for personal growth and development. The following section, *Reaching the Full Potential of Relationships: Individuality and Background*, offers considerations for adapting health-promoting relationship efforts to meet the unique needs and contexts of the youth you work with.

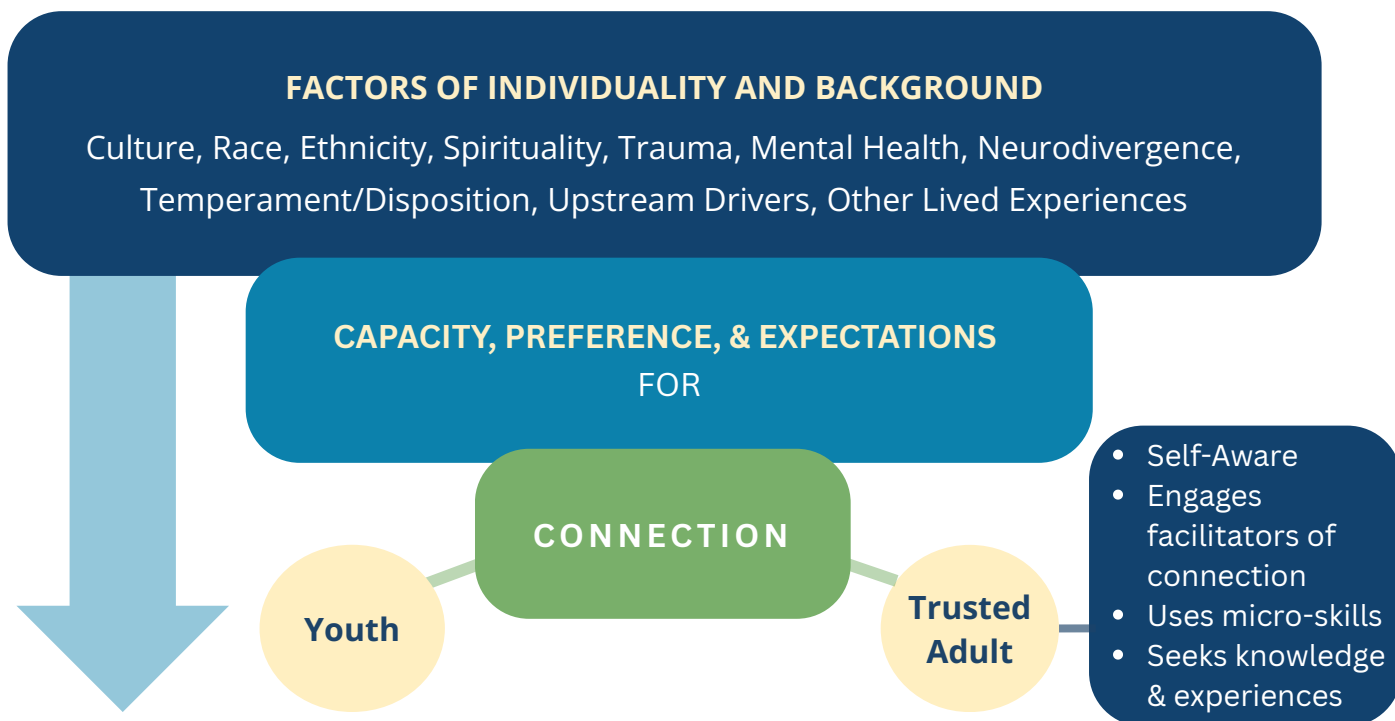
Lastly, as many of the skills (and steps for building those skills) presented in this toolkit are routinely used in therapeutic and coaching contexts, additional resources and guidance to support their implementation may be found online.

REACHING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS

Individuality and Background

People are healthiest when we feel safe and supported by others. Biologically, we are wired for social connection and our interconnectedness meets several fundamental needs while also promoting health and well-being.¹³³⁻¹³⁴ Naturally, humans are diverse and vary in their capacity, preference, and expectations for social connection and relationships. The **Health-Promoting Relationship Paradigm** offers a synthesized approach to connection and relationship development aimed at fostering youth well-being through the cultivation of protective belief systems. For this paradigm to achieve widespread application and maximal benefit, it is important to consider how its approaches may need to be adapted across diverse groups to meet the varied needs of youth.

In developing the guidance within this section, we assume you are familiar with the youth you work with, and a deep dive into the nuances of relational connection across special populations extends beyond the focus of this toolkit. Thus, what we share below is a process and considerations for thinking through how **Health-Promoting Relationships** can achieve their fullest potential with all youth.



The figure above offers a comprehensive visual of reaching the full potential of health promoting relationships starting with the various factors that make up a person’s individuality and background. These factors impact human capacity, preference, and expectations for connection, for both youth and adults. We, as trusted adults, can help shape youth experiences of connection as well as our own experience of connection through our own insight and actions. We can enhance our self-awareness and personal development through exposure to new experiences and knowledge, which will better prepare us to meaningfully engage the facilitators of connection and use micro-skills with youth.

Considerations for Reaching the Full Potential of Relationships

Youth from different backgrounds may differ in their ability and desire to connect with others, build relationships, and develop protective beliefs and skills. Recognizing and responding to these differences can build trust and help relationships achieve their greatest impact. Indeed, self-knowledge, insight into others, and respect and appreciation for differences are fundamental to connection and relational development.

Given that no two people are alike, successful relationships across all contexts involve the development of self-awareness, gaining an understanding of others, and finding ways to bridge differences through authentic connection. And yet when we look at the many dimensions of human difference, particularly those involving cultural background including race and ethnicity, neuro/psychological variations, traumatic experiences or childhood adversity, mental health, temperament, hardships such as food insecurity or poverty, other lived experiences, and spirituality (among others), we discover just how impactful these differences can be. These different facets of identity and lived experience can substantially shape a young person's capacity, preference, and expectations for connection, and the ways in which they interact and form bonds with others. Recognizing and thoughtfully considering these differences as we cultivate health-promoting relationships demonstrates empathy, compassion, and humility – all essential qualities for meaningful connection. **But perhaps most importantly: Adults using strategies to connect across differences have better relationships with youth, and youth perceive them as being more supportive.**¹³⁵

Connecting across Cultures

Culture can be defined as a dynamic system of knowledge, concepts, rules, and practices that are learned and transmitted across generations and change over time. Culture encompasses language, religion and spirituality, family structures, life-cycle stages, ceremonial rituals, customs, and moral and legal systems. Culture is also profoundly connected to other social identities such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.¹⁴⁹ Culture fundamentally influences connection and relationship development. For example, one's culture may inform how relationships are perceived, expectations within those relationships, and resulting relational behaviors such as eye contact, physical contact and touch, and verbal expression.¹⁵⁰ Culture also influences how certain protective factors such as autonomy, self-worth, and community are viewed, valued (or disapproved), experienced, and expressed.

Becoming “competent” in another's culture or background is not the goal. Instead, the goal is to become aware of differences that can influence one's ability to connect with another. Recognize the unique strengths and cultural assets youth hold, bring them into your relationship, and engage in ways that make youth feel seen and respected for who they are – this is essential for building strong relationships with youth.^{146–148}

Neuropsychological Diversity and Relationship Development

Youth experiencing some of the most common neuropsychological differences, including depression, anxiety, trauma, autism, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and others may be more likely to struggle to develop and maximize their friendships and relationships. These youth may also vary in their ability to tolerate and respond to distress, understand and express their feelings, remain present and focused in social interactions, contribute to social exchanges, and may engage in atypical social behaviors. Misunderstanding these visible social behaviors as lack of interest or effort can result in lost opportunities for connection and/or frustration when working with youth to cultivate protective beliefs and foster corresponding skills. As trusted adults, it is important to remember that youth come from diverse backgrounds that may influence their ability to engage and participate in relationships.

Responding to Differences: Challenges and Opportunities

Within the health-promoting relationships paradigm, where the relationship serves as the primary tool for change, differences are to be expected. And yet, when we don't share experiences or backgrounds with the youth we work with, we may have to work harder to connect. Differences that are more complex may challenge our ability to cultivate protective beliefs and skills, and possibly even drain the energy we might otherwise direct toward efforts to connect. This is partly because aspects of difference influence our communication styles, values, emotional expression, and our ability and desire to connect. **When we and the youth we serve differ in these areas, it becomes crucial to enhance our efforts to engage the facilitators of connection as mechanisms for achieving connectedness.** Depending on the differences present, it may at times also be beneficial to engage other trusted adults with professional experience in meeting the unique needs of youth (e.g., trauma, neurodivergence).

When youth present with different communication styles, values around emotional expression or differences in their ability or desire to connect, we can experience these differences as off-putting or even offensive. As trusted adults, we may have negative or unhelpful responses based on unchecked assumptions. These reactions can happen to anyone, particularly under stress or time constraints, and are more likely in the context of differences when true understanding of another person is lacking. The problem with responding in reactionary ways is that it can drive us toward disconnection. The goal is not to halt internal thoughts and feelings, but to recognize them as they arise and take a moment to craft a more positive or helpful response. To put this into context, we have created a table below to share several scenarios that could trigger a counterproductive reaction within a trusted adult. Alongside these connection-hindering reactions are alternate responses that work to build stronger connection. Notice the many **facilitators of connection** within the third column describing sample connection-building responses.

SCENARIOS	CONNECTION-HINDERING REACTIONS	CONNECTION-BUILDING RESPONSES
A youth interrupts you with a negative statement about what you are sharing to a group of their peers.	Respond reactively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "They're not going to talk to me like that." "If I let this slide, I'll lose control." "I can't believe they just did that!" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice self-awareness and patience by pausing before responding. Utilize empathy to consider differences in communication styles driving your and the youth's reactions. Show humility by recognizing that strong emotions may signal something important the youth is trying to communicate. Respond with respect: "I can see you're upset. Help me understand what's happening for you right now."
A youth that's been selected for a leadership role gets into a fight with another student from the program.	Shut down opportunities for the youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "They're not ready for this opportunity." "I'm done trying with them." "They lost their chance." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate empathy and nonjudgment, recognizing that setbacks are part of growth. Show nurturance: "This didn't go as planned. Let's talk about what happened and how to move forward from here." Approach with curiosity and full presence, considering what may have influenced their choices.
A youth perceives your comment about their "interesting" way of thinking or speaking as putting them down for being different.	Say things that cause harm without realizing it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I didn't mean it that way. It's not a big deal." "They're overreacting, kids today are too sensitive." "I've worked with kids like this for years, I know what they need." "It's just how I talk. I wasn't trying to hurt you." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice self-awareness and humility to recognize the harm that may have been caused. Practice self-acceptance for inadvertently causing harm, while developing empathy for the youths' experience of harm. Show care by being quick to apologize and acknowledging the impact of your actions: "I hear that my words hurt you, and I'm sorry. Help me understand how I can do better."
A youth routinely arrives 10-minutes late to your meetings and then doesn't make eye contact and appears disinterested.	Assuming negative intent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "They're just trying to push my buttons." "They're being manipulative." "They don't care about this program." "They're always difficult." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show nonjudgment and full presence by staying curious about the youth's experience. Utilize empathy and respect to consider the youth's unique capacity, preference, and expectations for how they show up. Practice self-awareness by considering how your interpretations are affecting you. Approach with kindness and care: "I wonder what's making being on-time and engaging difficult for you. How can I help best support you?"

Each young person brings with them a distinct mix of qualities and life experiences that shape how they express themselves, build relationships, and engage with the world. These facets reflect the ways they've been shaped by their environments, communities, and past interactions. By tuning into aspects of difference and gaining the ability to pause connection-hindering reactions before they occur, trusted adults can take time to understand the meaning behind youth behavior better and respond in ways that promote connection. **When we can move beyond focusing on behavior alone to comprehend a young person's circumstances, values, and personal history, we allow ourselves the gift of cultivating the trust and connection that makes health-promotion more probable.**

As a trusted adult, you can also take steps to intentionally develop your capacity to create connection despite differences, enabling your relationships with youth to serve as pathways for nurturing their well-being. Start by taking an open and honest look at your challenges and strengths in building relationships with young people whose backgrounds, beliefs, or lived experiences are different from your own.

Strategies to Connect across Difference

Your own facilitators of connection and micro-skills, discussed earlier in this toolkit, offer a fundamental and universal *way of being* with youth that fosters connection, even when differences are present. In addition, when connecting and building relationships with youth from varied backgrounds and supporting their development of protective belief systems, consider opportunities to enhance your approach. We encourage you to take time to reflect on how you currently connect with youth from different backgrounds. Below are a few reflection questions that may help you uncover the unique challenges and opportunities that currently exist when connecting with youth from different backgrounds. As you reflect, we invite you to consider your strengths and where more focused attention would help you better connect with youth. Perhaps think about the youth you have struggled to connect with and look for any patterns that may hinder connection.

Reflection Questions

- 1. What facets of difference (e.g. culture, neuro/psychological variations, economic hardship including food insecurity, family structure and dynamics, traumatic experiences or childhood adversity, racial and ethnic identity, spirituality, etc.) are central to the youth you work with?**
- 2. In what ways do you share these aspects with the youth you serve, and in what ways do you differ?**
- 3. How do these similarities and differences influence your (and their) ability to build trust and connection with one another?**
- 4. How might thoughtfully recognizing and respecting these dimensions of difference, whether through direct conversation or other ways, affect your relationships with youth?**

On the following page are three strategies that can facilitate relational connection in the context of difference.¹⁵⁹⁻¹⁶² Try to identify 2-3 growth areas as next steps to support your relationships in reaching their full potential. As you review these strategies, take note of the many ways in which the facilitators of connection can be leveraged to support connection across differences.



1 SELF-AWARENESS

(Facilitator of Connection: Self-Awareness)

- ▶ Explore the role of your own background and identities on your values and assumptions.
- ▶ Identify your beliefs, attitudes, and biases about youth from different backgrounds or abilities.
- ▶ Assess your comfort with connecting through differences and identify ways to decrease any discomfort or address any of the growth opportunities identified in your self-reflection. Ways to get started could include doing research/watching videos to reduce unknowns, or increasing exposure to people different than you, then reflecting on your internal reactions.

2 EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON'S BACKGROUND(S)

(Facilitators of Connection: Humility, Care, Nonjudgment, Respect, Vulnerability)

- ▶ Cultivate an attitude of openness, curiosity, and non-defensiveness toward learning about others. Ask the youth, "What do you feel is important for me to know about you?"
- ▶ Attend events and gatherings where you will have an opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds.
- ▶ Set an intention to establish connection and relationships with people from different backgrounds.
- ▶ Seek out knowledge and information about the backgrounds of the youth you work with. Ask them, "What are the most important aspects of your background or identity? Are there any aspects of your background or identity that make a difference in how you manage school?"
- ▶ Observe and ask questions about differences in communication styles and values, interests, and beliefs.
- ▶ Observe communication patterns among youth and their families and reflect on how mismatches between your communication patterns, beliefs, values and experiences and those of the youth you work with could impact your ability to form health-promoting relationships with them. Ask, "How can I show up in a way that is most useful for you?"

3 POSITIVE ACTION TO FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH A PERSON FROM A DIFFERENT BACKGROUND

(Facilitators of Connection: Care, Respect, Nurturance, Patience, Full Presence, Self-Awareness)

- ▶ Acknowledge and celebrate strengths and interests.
- ▶ Create a space that feels safe and supportive.
- ▶ Initiate conversations with a focus on the interests of the youth.
- ▶ Exercise patience if it takes a while for a youth to warm up or engage, or if they engage minimally in a conversation.
- ▶ Reframe and/or simplify questions if needed. Try asking one question at a time.
- ▶ Be mindful of your body language and the body language of others. Ask questions if you are having a hard time reading someone's body/social cues.
- ▶ Embrace and accept what may seem like atypical social behavior (e.g., lack of eye contact, quirks, repetitive movements).
- ▶ Seek out relationships with youths' families; inquire with curiosity to learn more about the family and their backgrounds.
- ▶ Ask youth questions with humility and curiosity if you don't understand where they are coming from.

Beyond the Individual: Embracing Health-Promoting Relationships as an Organization

The **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** represents a fundamental element of any prevention approach given its emphasis on the power of relationships. At the individual level, trusted adults engage in an HPR *way of being* with youth that cultivates protective beliefs and enables youth to be well. Beyond the individual level, the HPR paradigm can also yield great benefit when applied within teams and organizations where HPR concepts can be brought to life in a meaningful way through the **culture** that is created when health-promoting relationships are a clear value of the organization. The HPR *way of being* becomes evident in the organization's mindset, environment, priorities, activities, conversations, and approach to serving youth. Members of the organization are able, motivated, and willing to "stretch with purpose" and engage in the HPR *way of being* throughout their lives, among their teams, and especially with the youth they serve.

As the HPR approach becomes institutionalized in ethos and action within and across organizations, the power and impact can be amplified into the community,¹⁴⁰ creating ripple effects that extend beyond the immediate youth-adult dynamic: 1) Youth begin modeling characteristics of health-promoting relationships with one another, creating positive relational norms and a culture of wellness that is self-sustaining,¹⁴¹ 2) Parents/caregivers, school staff, and other community members internalize and reinforce relational values such as connection through authenticity, patience, and empathy,¹⁴¹ and 3) Schools, probation agencies, healthcare organizations, and other youth-serving organizations prioritize relationships as a foundational strategy for well-being, ultimately contributing to public health and safety goals at the community level.¹⁴¹⁻¹⁴³

We never outgrow the need for believing we are seen and loved, we matter, we can influence our life, we can overcome hard things, and we have support. When health-promoting relationships are valued by an organization, ALL individuals involved benefit.

Aligning Organizational Culture with Health-Promoting Relationships

Just as individual adults can move from awareness to intention to growth in their capacity and skills to develop and reinforce protective beliefs that help youth flourish, teams, organizations, and communities also undergo a comparable process in their work to embrace health-promoting relationships. An intentional and reflective approach can help support meaningful and sustainable adoption.^{144,145} The following questions serve as starting points for reflection on opportunities to thoughtfully build HPR concepts into the culture.



Beyond the Individual (cont.)



To what extent is the health-promoting relationship way of being EVIDENT in your organization?

Engaging in an honest assessment of whether the organization, the people within it, and the people it serves actively nurture health-promoting relationships provides the information needed to determine how an organization can encourage and support health-promoting relationships.

- **Discuss how health-promoting relationships as a value are already evident.**
 - Where is the HPR way of being routinely observed?
 - In what ways are they documented and integrated into organizational policies and practices?
- **Identify new opportunities to make the HPR way of being more evident within the culture.**
 - Consider the environment, priorities, activities, conversations, and overall approach.
 - How might HPR concepts support or enhance organizational goals?
 - Discuss whether a mindset shift may be advantageous.
 - Assess what additional staff training may be needed to support staff in practicing an HPR way of being.
 - Consider what policies or procedures might reinforce opportunities for staff to practice an HPR way of being.
 - What potential differences within the organization, its employees, and those it serves would be noticed if health-promoting relationships were the norm?



In what ways can our organization grow towards a health-promoting relationship way of being?

Common growth opportunities within organizations include: 1) identifying health-promoting relationships as a value for the organization, 2) fostering a growth-mindset, 3) increasing knowledge about the benefits of health-promoting relationships or how to translate it into the workplace, 4) building skills to use in health-promoting relationships, and 5) organizational leaders setting the tone and serving as champions for the HPR way of being. Awareness of areas for growth can support identification of potential challenges and facilitate change, both at personal and organizational levels. This can take time. Build readiness for change by modeling health-promoting relationships as an individual, slowly planting seeds of what health-promoting relationships look like and the impact they can have.

An *Organizational Self-Reflection & Planning Tool* is included in the Assessments section of this toolkit to guide your team or organization through identifying opportunities to advance and support a culture that promotes well-being by bringing an HPR way of being to life in meaningful ways.

A Journey toward Well-Being - Individually and Together

Embracing a relational approach to prevention and well-being requires ongoing reflection, dialogue, and adaptation. By taking initial steps - however small - organizations can begin to build a culture where its employees and youth experience the protective, preventive, and flourishing benefits of health-promoting relationships. Each individual, organization, or community will have its own unique path in this work and also the opportunity to join forces for extraordinary impact. **When relationships are prioritized by individuals and organizations as intentional pathways to promoting youth prevention, protection, and flourishing, a community culture of well-being is supported.**

SHARING HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

The **Health-Promoting Relationship Paradigm** offers an innovative perspective on the transformative role of relationships in promoting youth well-being. We hope that once you have been trained or received these resources you will feel better prepared to apply this comprehensive approach to fostering the beliefs and skills that cultivate prevention, protection, and flourishing in youth. If this approach and the skills within this toolkit resonate, you may be well-positioned to champion this paradigm to other trusted adults among whom you live and work.

Arguably, any trusted adult routinely engaging with youth either personally or professionally may benefit from understanding and applying the health-promoting relationship paradigm's approach. There are several ways you may consider sharing this paradigm and/or the content within this toolkit with others. A few ideas to get started are provided below.

SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS.

The need for human connection within relationships is vital to well-being. While this fact has been well-established, people vary in how purposefully they work to strengthen or enhance their relationships with youth. Fewer are likely to be aware of how to leverage these relationships to achieve youth health and well-being. Sharing the **Health-Promoting Relationship Paradigm** with others and guiding them through its components is one possible starting point. It may also be helpful to highlight the outcomes achievable through fostering protective beliefs and skills in youth.

EDUCATE ON THE HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS WAY OF BEING

1. Create the environment. The environment we create as trusted adults sets a tone that influences how youth engage with, experience and benefit from what is learned in that context. Share ideas with other trusted adults for how you have created an emotional and physical environment that facilitating health-promoting conversations and activities. Describe the impact of those efforts on the youth and the relationship. Encourage them to consider how they may also achieve a health-promoting environment in their unique contexts.

2. Facilitate connection. People may not be aware of the science of human connection. One solution is to encourage trusted adults to increase their awareness of how they are connecting with youth and consider opportunities to cultivate the facilitators of connection more intentionally. A strong connection will set the stage for trusted adults to be more effective in cultivating beliefs, activating agency, and equipping youth with skills.

Encourage trusted adults to complete the Facilitators of Connection brief self-assessment and choose exercises to enhance their abilities in connection attributes that may benefit from further development. Seek opportunities to share, receive validation, reinforce progress, and learn from one another's experience.

3. Engage your skills. The ability to consistently engage your own skills requires intentional practice and routine reflection on what is working well, and what can be improved upon. Encourage other trusted adults to complete the Skills for Trusted Adults self-assessment and set a commitment to develop specific micro-skills. Have follow-up discussions where you can each reflect and share your experiences. Offer mutual support by validating challenges and reinforcing growth.

4. Develop skills in youth. Introduce opportunities to build healthy beliefs and skills. Share ideas for how other trusted adults might cultivate protective beliefs in youth within their unique roles. Share general considerations and suggest concrete skills they can integrate into their work with youth to build or strengthen protective beliefs. Describe how you have done so within your role(s). Share an example that you have tried and discuss how it was received, what was learned through that process, and any observed outcomes.

MODEL HEALTH-PROMOTING RELATIONSHIPS.

Allow your relationships with other trusted adults to serve as opportunities for role modeling, growing connection, and strengthening beliefs and skills. For example, as you strengthen various connection facilitators or engage in micro-skills like curiosity, it can be valuable to ask the other person about their experience and the impact your approach may have had on them. Also, invite others to observe and practice the HPR way of being with you!

MAIN MESSAGES

The following messages and table can be used to facilitate conversations with trusted adults related to the power of relationships in fostering prevention, protection, and flourishing in youth.

- 1 Many factors that prevent harmful behaviors and conditions in youth and promote protection and flourishing can be **cultivated through relationships** with trusted adults.
- 2 A “health-promoting relationship” is a **way of being** that enables health and well-being in youth by cultivating protective beliefs.
- 3 A *way of being* in health-promoting relationships includes the **environment we create, how we facilitate connection, the words and actions we use, and the skills we foster in youth.**
- 4 Health-promoting relationships with youth **begin with work within YOU**, the trusted adult.
- 5 Trusted adults can help reach the full potential of their relationships with youth by considering how their approach may need to be adapted to best meet the youth’s **capacity, preferences, and expectations for** connection and relationships.
- 6 When relationships are prioritized by individuals and organizations as intentional pathways to promoting youth prevention, protection, and flourishing, a **community culture of well-being** is supported.
- 7 Every interaction we have with youth is an **opportunity** to build or reinforce protective beliefs if we have an HPR mindset.

BELIEFS

1. I am seen and loved.
2. I matter.
3. I can influence my life.
4. I can overcome hard things.
5. I have support.

MICRO-SKILLS

1. Be fully present & notice.
2. Affirm youth strengths, values, contributions, and how much they are needed.
3. Be curious.
4. Mirror and reflect back to youth.
5. Activate agency.
6. Support youth in navigating challenges.
7. Advocate for youth.

YOUTH SKILLS

1. Practice self-alignment.
2. Practice a growth mindset.
3. Exercise agency.
4. Make healthy choices.
5. Engage strategies to be well.
6. Care about others.
7. Connect with others and community.

ASSESSMENTS

The assessments provided in the toolkit were created by the authors for the purpose of self-reflection, identification of growth opportunities, and application of the **Health-Promoting Relationships Paradigm** to organizations and systems. They are not validated screening tools. We encourage you to re-visit the assessments over time to monitor change and to continue to identify new opportunities for enhancement.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: FACILITATORS OF CONNECTION

The following brief assessment offers opportunities for self-reflection and planning to strengthen one's connection abilities within oneself. Using the Facilitators of Connection table from your toolkit to understand the full definition and characteristics associated with each facilitator, identify the facilitators you feel you are strong at as well as those you may need to work on. Think specifically about the context of building health-promoting relationships with the youth in your life. For facilitators you may need more time with, identify at least one specific way you will focus on applying or strengthening your skills with this facilitator in your encounters with youth.

FACILITATOR	STRONG	NEEDS WORK	OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP
AUTHENTIC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
CARING	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
EMPATHETIC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
FULLY PRESENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
HONEST	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
HUMBLE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
KIND	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
LOVING	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
NONJUDGMENTAL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
NURTURING	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
PATIENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
RESPECTFUL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
SELF-AWARE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
SELF-ACCEPTING	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
SELF-ALIGNED	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
VULNERABLE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____

SELF-ASSESSMENT: MICRO-SKILLS FOR TRUSTED ADULTS

The following self-assessment offers opportunities for reflection and planning to strengthen your use of micro-skills to foster the protective core belief system in the youth you interact with. Read through the Micro-skills for trusted adults table from your toolkit to understand the micro-skills for each belief along with the accompanying actions, sample statements, and questions. Think specifically about the context of building health-promoting relationships with the youth in your life.

		Often	Some times	Rarely
Be fully present and notice.	1.I focus all attention on youth in the present moment.			
	2.I let go of competing priorities and distractions.			
	3.I relax the urge to teach, fix, or remind.			
	4.I scan for details, strengths or successes, struggles and other elements of what the youth is experiencing or contemplating.			
	5.I notice the youth in a way that communicates back to the youth that I see them for who they are, care about the details of their lives, and miss them when they are not around.			
Affirm youth strengths, values, contributions, and how much they are needed.	1.I listen for strengths within youth that may be expressed as actions, attitudes, knowledge, understanding, feelings, goals, and values.			
	2.I reframe my observations towards youths' development, goals, & values.			
	3.I keep affirmations all about the youth vs. inserting myself in any way (e.g. "I think that you..." vs. "You...")			
	4.I ground affirmations in what is authentic and true.			
	5.I praise effort, strategies, and growth (not just outcomes).			
	6.I express to youth they matter to me, how I miss them when they are not present, and the ways it is better when they are around.			
	7.I remind youth how they are needed and relied upon for their contributions.			
Be curious.	1.I draw out youths' perspectives, thoughts, feelings, purpose, values and goals.			
	2.I put aside my schemas, assumptions, and past experiences to increase your readiness and ability to be curious.			
	3.I engage in perspective taking.			
	4.I ask deep and purposeful open-ended questions.			
	5.I avoid responding to youths' sharing with feedback, solutions, or even self-disclosure of similar experiences.			
Mirror and reflect back to youth.	1.I listen and observe deeply with full presence to understand the true essence of what youth are expressing and sharing.			
	2.I choose what to reflect with the purpose of youth feeling seen and heard AND to foster my own self-awareness and growth.			
	3.I offer reflective statements to youth often.			
	4.I convey acceptance and nonjudgment when offering reflections.			
	5.I receive any reaction to your reflections as information and an opportunity to deepen connection, even if it's a signal I may not have fully understood the youth.			

SELF-ASSESSMENT: MICRO-SKILLS FOR TRUSTED ADULTS (CONT.)

		Often	Some times	Rarely
Activate agency.	1.I empower youths’ sense of their strengths and skills.			
	2.I ask youth for their thoughts, ideas, solutions, and next steps.			
	3.I create opportunities for youth to lead and to exercise their freedom.			
	4.I avoid initially providing direction or offering advice or solutions in a way where I can be seen as “taking charge”.			
	5.I exercise patience and give youth the space and time to identify and arrive at their own solutions or ideas about a course of action.			
	6.I express confidence in youths’ ability to make their own decisions, act independently and set boundaries for themselves.			
	7.I normalize that sometimes it takes more than one try and that things not working out is not failure but rather learning more about what does and does not work.			
	8.I offer meaningful choices.			
	9.I believe in youths’ potential.			
Support youth in navigating challenges.	1.I increase youths’ understanding of what the challenge is and how it is affecting them.			
	2.I partner with youth to support them to identify their own solutions and steps.			
	3.I normalize that we all have problems and navigating them is not easy.			
	4.I show compassion towards youth, including conveying the idea of self-compassion.			
	5.I support youth to Build and Seek Out support.			
Advocate for youth.	1.I explore and honor youths’ thoughts, ideas, and wishes for support and advocacy.			
	2.I balance the degree of support and backing I provide youth so as to ensure youth continue to feel empowered.			
	3.I invite youth to offer feedback after advocating on their behalf.			
	4.I normalize challenges and reframe setbacks.			
	5.I connect youth with people, places, information, resources, and/or opportunities that will support their goals or ability to thrive.			

REFLECTION EXERCISE

1. Which actions and statements do I do most consistently? What micro-skills do they fall under?
2. Which actions and statements do I do rarely? What micro-skills do they fall under?
3. What patterns are there, if any?
4. What do I want or need to do next to boost my micro-skills?
5. What barriers might I face, and how can I address them?

ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-REFLECTION & PLANNING TOOL (Page 1 of 2)

The *Organizational Self-Reflection and Planning Tool* will guide you through identifying opportunities to thoughtfully build the HPR *way of being* into organizational culture across five domains:

1) organizational values and mission, 2) policies and procedures, 3) programs and services, 4) workforce training, and 5) process improvement. Within each domain, review the considerations to support you in identifying where HPR concepts may fit best within that domain. Then use the reflection questions to generate action items to meaningfully integrate health-promoting relationships and its concepts into your organization’s mindset, environment, priorities, activities, conversations, and approach to serving youth.

Opportunities	Reflection Questions	Action Items
Organizational Values and Mission		
<p>Reflect on how HPR currently fits within organizational values and priorities. Build a shared understanding of why health-promoting relationships matter. Tie this vision directly to the organization's goals and to the key outcomes the organization aims to impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the principles of health-promoting relationships evident in our organization’s mission, vision, values, and/or principles? • How clear would it be to someone reading our mission, vision, values, and/or principles that we prioritize and center health-promoting relationships to promote youth well-being and flourishing? 	
Policies and Procedures		
<p>Review policies and procedures to assess how they might reinforce or undermine opportunities for staff to engage HPR concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do our policies and procedures <u>reinforce</u> or <u>undermine</u> opportunities for adults to build safe, trusting connections with youth? • How are the <i>way of being</i> strategies and five protective beliefs reflected in our policies and procedures, within our teams, and within us as individuals? • How well do our policies and procedures acknowledge and account for different needs of youth? 	
Programs and Services		
<p>Create an inventory of the programs and services in the organization’s portfolio that offers adults opportunities to interact with youth. For each program or service, assess the degree to which opportunities are being fully utilized to engage the HPR <i>way of being</i>. Identify gaps and opportunities to better align programs and services with the HPR paradigm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are our programs and services embodying elements of a health-promoting relationship approach? • What aspects of our programs might create barriers to creating the environment, connecting with youth, and engaging micro-skills? • In what ways do our programs and services prioritize and offer opportunities for youth to develop protective skills? • How are we approaching relational development across our programs and services in ways consistent with the health-promoting relationships approach? 	

Opportunities	Reflection Questions	Action Items
Workforce Training		
<p>Consider what additional training staff may need in the HPR mindset and <i>way of being</i>, and what ongoing support will be needed to support staff as they put these concepts into practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What training and support do staff have to prioritize health-promoting relationships with youth, including youth who might require additional considerations or support? • How do we include language in job descriptions and interview questions that promote a culture of health-promoting relationships? • In what ways are staff enabled and consistently encouraged to model the <i>way of being</i> strategies with one another and the youth they serve through training, organizational culture, and reflection on their own awareness, intention-setting, and growth? 	
Process Improvement		
<p>Look for opportunities to measure the organization’s ability to support health-promoting relationships among adults and youth. Seek feedback through focus groups, surveys, or interviews about how the organization can better foster health-promoting relationships. Use the data gathered to inform process improvements.</p>	<p>Capturing youth and staff voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do youth feel connected to us? How would youth describe the ways we are cultivating the five protective core beliefs within them through the environments we create, our words and actions, and skill-building efforts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Do youth feel seen and loved by us? ◦ Do youth believe they matter to us? ◦ Do youth believe they have our support? ◦ Do youth believe they have greater capacity to influence their life because of their experience with us? ◦ Do youth believe they are better able to overcome hard things as a result of our work with them? • In what ways do staff feel meaningfully connected with members of their team? Their organization? <p>Organizational outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data do we collect and meaningfully use that is relevant to priorities for building health-promoting relationships with youth? • How does our organization demonstrate that health-promoting relationships are essential to our organization through measuring our effectiveness with the <i>way of being</i> strategies to cultivate protective beliefs within youth? • In what ways do our performance metrics reflect long-term outcomes of prevention of harmful behaviors, flourishing, and overall well-being of youth? • How are relevant data from the above questions broken down to understand the unique impact across the various subgroups of youth we serve? • Does our organization have a process for making sense of our data and utilizing it to plan for continuous improvement? 	

ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-REFLECTION & PLANNING TOOL

PRIORITIZING ACTION ITEMS

After identifying some opportunities for action, your organization will likely want to prioritize which to work on first. This prioritization process might include considering:

- Are there “low-hanging fruits”, quick wins that might take little effort yet build momentum?
- If we accomplish the desired change, which opportunities will have the most significant impact on the youth we serve?
- Which are the most feasible to accomplish given the resources and buy-in necessary (could we break the opportunity down into stages to make it more manageable)?
- Will it be possible to measure the impact of the change?

ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

After prioritizing your organization’s top few opportunities for adopting a Health-Promoting Relationships’ *way of being*, you’ll want to (1) assess your organization’s readiness for adopting each prioritized change, and (2) develop a detailed plan for implementation, assessment, and refinement. Like a community prevention planning process (such as the Strategic Prevention Framework), the steps might include:

Assessing Readiness/Capacity

- Assess organizational readiness and resources to pursue the prioritized change
- Take necessary steps to increase readiness and capacity before beginning implementation

Planning

- Establish goals and objectives for identified action item(s)
- Develop and document the rationale for each goal
- Develop a workplan (action steps, resources/partners needed)
- Develop an evaluation plan

Implementation

- Implement workplan
- Implement process evaluation

Evaluation and Refinement

- How will we know it’s working (indicators and accountability)
- Plan for adjusting the implementation to increase the likelihood of impact and sustained organizational culture and practice change

These changes do not have to happen all at once, but committing to aligning organizational culture with relational values can help ensure that cultivating health-promoting relationships remains central to the organization’s way of operating. Rather than seeing this as a one-time initiative, acknowledge the shift in mindset and practice that evolves.

PLAYBOOKS

This section offers practical strategies for how trusted adults in different roles can cultivate health-promoting relationships with youth. Examples in the toolkit thus far have illustrated how any trusted adult can facilitate connection, use micro-skills, and foster protective skills in youth. The following six playbooks build on this foundation with additional ideas and guidance for how adults in specific roles can adapt these strategies to their contexts and relationships with youth: parents/caregivers, educators, healthcare professionals, coalitions, law enforcement/corrections, and sports coaches. These roles were selected due to their high-frequency contact with youth, unique opportunities for a more nuanced application of a health-promoting approach, and requests received by ADAPT for more support when putting this toolkit into practice in these roles.

The science supporting the importance of each role is found in the table below along with unique opportunities each role has for cultivating youth well-being. This table may be helpful as you communicate the importance of health-promoting relationships to adults within these roles and advocate for them to prioritize health-promoting relationships with youth.

Table: Supporting Evidence for Playbook Roles

1. PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Positive parental/caregiver involvement is one of the strongest protective factors for youth well-being, with warm, supportive parent-child relationships providing the foundation youth need to thrive from childhood through emerging adulthood.¹⁴⁹⁻¹⁵³ This is because parents and caregivers have a unique influence in shaping youth well-being through consistent presence, unconditional love, intentional modeling, and evolving support that balances connection with growing independence. Opportunities for parents and caregivers to engage a health-promoting relationships way of being and cultivate protective beliefs and skills in youth can be found in every aspect of parenting.

- **Parents and caregivers create the foundational environment for development.** The family serves as a laboratory where youth practice and develop essential skills, abilities, and competencies, such as navigating social interactions, forming their identity, achieving autonomy, and developing healthy coping.
- **Healthy family dynamics and parent-child relationships achieve protection, prevention, and flourishing.** Positive family and parental relationships and activities lead to youth well-being and prevention of problem or risk behaviors, including mental health concerns and substance use risk.^{149,154-155}
- **Parents and caregivers offer a unique influence.** Often the primary and most consistent adults in young people's lives, parents and caregivers are uniquely positioned to provide unconditional love and cultivate the protective belief "I am seen and loved" in ways other relationships don't or can't.
- **Parents and caregivers shape beliefs through words and actions.** Youth often observe parents/caregivers more closely and consistently than any other adults, seeking guidance and learning from what parents say and do. Parents influence their children's values, morals, beliefs, and behaviors through direct teaching and indirect modeling, making everyday interactions powerful teaching moments. Positive family role models in adolescence can lead to safe behavior choices, higher interest in education, and greater reported happiness.¹⁵⁶
- **The parental role evolves through adolescence.** As youth eventually spend more time with peers and explore their identities, the parental role shifts to encouraging autonomy. Parents remain essential by serving as both anchors of support and guidance as well as launching pads for fostering independence while maintaining emotional connection and availability in ways that meet everyone's changing needs.¹⁵³

2. EDUCATORS

Many factors that support students' **academic success**, prevent harmful behaviors, protect them in the context of risk, and support their ability to flourish can be cultivated through relationships with the trusted adults they interact with in the **school environment**. Decades of research have established the impact of students' relationships with teachers and other school staff on school engagement, school behavior, and academic achievement¹⁵⁷, showing that trust, warmth and empathy are key characteristics of these protective relationships.¹⁵⁸ and the resulting positive impact is long-lasting.¹⁵⁹

(continued on next page)

- **Teachers and other adults in the school are key figures in the lives of youth due to the amount of time youth spend in school.** It is estimated that school staff interact with 95% of school-aged children (K-12) for around 6 hours per day¹⁶⁰. Schools are second only to families in the amount of time and influence they have on students' development, including the formation of healthy (or unhealthy) beliefs.
- Because nearly every child attends school at some point, **schools have a near-universal potential to reach almost every youth and their parents/caregivers.** This opportunity has a significant impact when educators and staff are trained to create a culture of well-being.
- **Schools offer continuity in the lives of children,** making them instrumental in supporting healthy youth development and well-being from early childhood through young adulthood (K-12, i.e. ages 5-18).
- **All school staff** – including teachers, administrators, student services professionals, and support roles such as bus drivers, cafeteria worker, and custodians – **can serve as trusted adults for students** and have opportunities to cultivate protective beliefs in students.
- **School staff and teachers have typically chosen to work with students in a school environment because they care about youth.**¹⁶¹ They are MOTIVATED not only to educate but to support youth development and cultivate healthy beliefs in students through role modeling, conversations, skill-building, and creating supportive environments. (*Learn more about how to create a positive school climate within the context of a broader school-based prevention strategy [HERE.](#)*)

3. COALITIONS

Community coalitions serve as both a coordinating mechanism and a living model of the power of relationships to promote health, safety, and thriving through shared purpose, mutual accountability, and authentic partnerships with youth. Coalitions play a unique role in cultivating health-promoting relationships across systems and within communities.¹⁴⁷ They not only bring together organizations that serve youth, but also model the relational qualities that those organizations aim to foster with young people.¹⁶² Coalitions align and strengthen the systems that shape young people's daily lives and contribute to reductions in youth substance use, violence, delinquency, and other problem behaviors, while promoting positive development, resilience, and thriving.¹⁶³⁻¹⁶⁴ By coordinating efforts across multiple sectors, domains, and developmental stages, coalitions help communities adopt consistent approaches that emphasize connection and the relational foundations of prevention and flourishing.¹⁶⁵ The coalition itself serves as a living demonstration of the principles it seeks to promote, modeling these relational values during meetings and events, and creating opportunities to activate youth development, engagement, and agency.

- **Coalitions model youth engagement and empowerment** and offer a venue and applied example for member organizations and sectors to witness youth leadership in action, where youth can contribute ideas, design or co-design solutions, and advise member organizations.¹⁶⁶
- **Coalitions foster collective impact through shared language and unified action.** By convening multiple sectors around common goals, coalitions help align prevention strategies, policies, and communication. A shared language about connection, safety, and health-promoting relationships enables each sector—schools, law enforcement, behavioral health, faith communities, and others—to reinforce consistent messages and approaches. This unity amplifies the impact of each organization's work and builds a community-wide culture of care and connection that youth can see and feel.¹⁶⁶
- **Coalitions build adult capacity for relational approaches.** When young people are invited into authentic leadership roles, adults learn to share power, listen deeply, and integrate youth perspectives into system-level decisions. Coalition partnerships offer opportunities for members to learn and grow with each other in various ways, supporting connection and cultivating health-promoting beliefs. Coalitions offer dedicated time and space for member organizations to learn and grow together. Regular meetings, joint trainings, and shared reflection help partners build skills in relational practice and apply these within their respective sectors.¹⁶⁷

4. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUSTICE SYSTEM

Adults working in law enforcement and justice system roles occupy uniquely influential positions in the lives of young people. They play a vital role in shaping not only public safety, but also youth development and broader community well-being.¹⁶⁸⁻¹⁷⁰ Relational approaches support long-term behavior change. When authority is exercised through connection, respect, and fairness, it models the very beliefs that protect youth from harm and guide them toward thriving futures. In doing so, officers and justice staff help communities become safer not only through enforcement, but through relationships. The quality of their interactions can profoundly influence youth trajectories, shaping not only compliance and behavior in the moment, but also longer-term beliefs about self-worth, resilience, safety, fairness, belonging, and trust in authority.¹⁶⁸⁻¹⁶⁹ Research shows that when justice professionals demonstrate empathy, procedural fairness, and respect, youth are more likely to comply with laws, engage positively with authority figures, and pursue prosocial behaviors.¹⁷¹ Conversely, when interactions convey hostility, fear, or unfair treatment, they can reinforce shame, mistrust, and defiance, or bring up past traumas, they undermine both individual well-being and public safety.¹⁷¹ **Law enforcement and justice system professionals thus have a dual opportunity and responsibility: to protect and serve the public while modeling the kinds of health-promoting relationships and beliefs that help youth thrive.** Their daily interactions as well as their responses in high-stakes or emotionally charged contexts can either strengthen or erode young people's belief that adults in authority can be trusted and that they themselves are capable, valued, and redeemable.¹⁷²

(continued on next page)

- **Positions of authority carry relational power and responsibility.** Unlike educators or healthcare professionals, law enforcement and justice staff often interact with youth in moments of crisis, discipline, or perceived wrongdoing, and in locations away from their family and friends. These encounters carry heightened emotional and psychological impact, amplifying the importance of relational skills. The way an officer speaks to a young person during a stop, or how a probation officer frames accountability or consequences, can either embed a belief of “I am bad and unchangeable” or foster “I am capable and supported.” This relational power is both a privilege and a responsibility that can shape life trajectories and community trust.
- **Law enforcement officers and justice staff shape critical beliefs about safety, fairness, and self-worth.** Youth form enduring perceptions about justice and authority through their direct experiences with officers, probation staff, or correctional personnel.¹⁷¹ When adults in these roles act with fairness, transparency, and respect, they promote connections that support the development of protective beliefs. These experiences not only improve behavior and reduce recidivism but also contribute to community trust and legitimacy in policing and the justice system. Conversely, inconsistent or punitive interactions can increase fear, alienation, or shame – beliefs that increase risk for aggression, disengagement, and continued justice involvement.
- **Connection builds adherence, accountability, and transformation.** Youth are more likely to follow rules and internalize accountability when they feel respected, heard, and valued. Officers and other justice professionals who take time to listen, explain decisions, and convey care, even while communicating accountability and consequences, help young people feel seen and capable of change.
- **Relational policing and supervision improve safety for youth, officers, and communities. Interactions grounded in trust and empathy de-escalate tension, reduce aggression, and increase officer and youth safety.** Programs that train officers and justice staff in adolescent brain development, trauma-informed practices, and relational communication show decreases in use-of-force incidents, disciplinary infractions, and staff burnout, alongside increases in youth engagement and cooperation.¹⁷³⁻¹⁷⁶ These outcomes show that relational approaches are not “soft” alternatives; they are essential strategies for effective, safe, and sustainable practice.
- **Agencies can institutionalize relational practice.** In the paramilitary structure of law enforcement and justice systems, authority is communicated clearly from leadership. Departments and justice agencies can endorse and foster health-promoting relationships by building relational principles into policies, training, and supervision. Trauma-informed policing curricula, de-escalation and mental health first aid training for first responders, procedural justice coaching, reflective supervision, and wellness initiatives help officers maintain empathy and perspective under stress, enabling them to practice and model those skills to youth and the community.¹⁷³⁻¹⁷⁸ Performance measures can also include indicators of trust-building, communication quality, and youth perceptions of fairness, signaling that relationship quality is integral to effective policing and justice system practice.^{170,174,179,180}

5. HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

“When I walk into the room, I am thinking, ‘What can I do to make this patient’s life better and make this visit more valuable? To understand where they are coming from.’ There was a program that brought people together with a chronic disease, so they can share and talk with each other. One patient, who had been resistant to attending, stated that, ‘Nobody has ever offered me this, I always felt so alone.’ Connecting him with others made a huge impact on his health and well-being.” ~Family Nurse Practitioner

Healthcare professionals – such as doctors, nurses, behavioral health providers, and counselors – are well-positioned to build protective beliefs and skills in youth. Given the often ongoing and trusting foundation of these relationships, providers can extend beyond the essential preventative care and treatment they provide to actively promote youth well-being.

- **Regular, structured touchpoints create consistent opportunities for influence.** Healthcare professionals often have multiple interactions with a young person throughout their development, including during well-child visits, sports physicals, sick visits, and behavioral health appointments. The greatest number of touchpoints occur in primary care, with 86% of U.S. youth ages 0–17 having at least one well-child visit annually.¹⁸¹ Collectively, healthcare offers ongoing opportunities to develop meaningful connection and build protective beliefs and skills throughout a youth’s development.
- **Healthcare professionals are uniquely positioned to serve as trusted adults.** Youth identify healthcare providers as among the most credible sources for health-related information.¹⁸² Trust is strengthened when providers demonstrate confidentiality, honesty, respect, and empathy—qualities consistent with a health-promoting approach.¹⁸³
- **Trust is essential for youth engagement and positive health outcomes.** The quality of the provider–youth relationship directly influences whether youth engage in care and their overall health outcomes. This is especially important for adolescents who may be navigating healthcare more independently for the first time and worry about embarrassment, judgment, confidentiality, or pain.¹⁸⁴ Healthcare professionals can address these fears by creating safe, nonjudgmental spaces where youth feel heard, respected, and empowered in their healthcare decisions.
- **Healthcare professionals can be equipped to promote whole-child health and well-being.** Beyond diagnosing and treating illness, providers can teach coping skills, model healthy communication, validate concerns, and help youth connect health behaviors to their personal values and goals—all of which cultivate protective beliefs that support resilience and flourishing. Additionally, asking about and exploring spirituality and integrating this into care aligns with standard and best practices across behavioral health disciplines (nursing, social work, psychology, medicine).

6. SPORTS COACHES

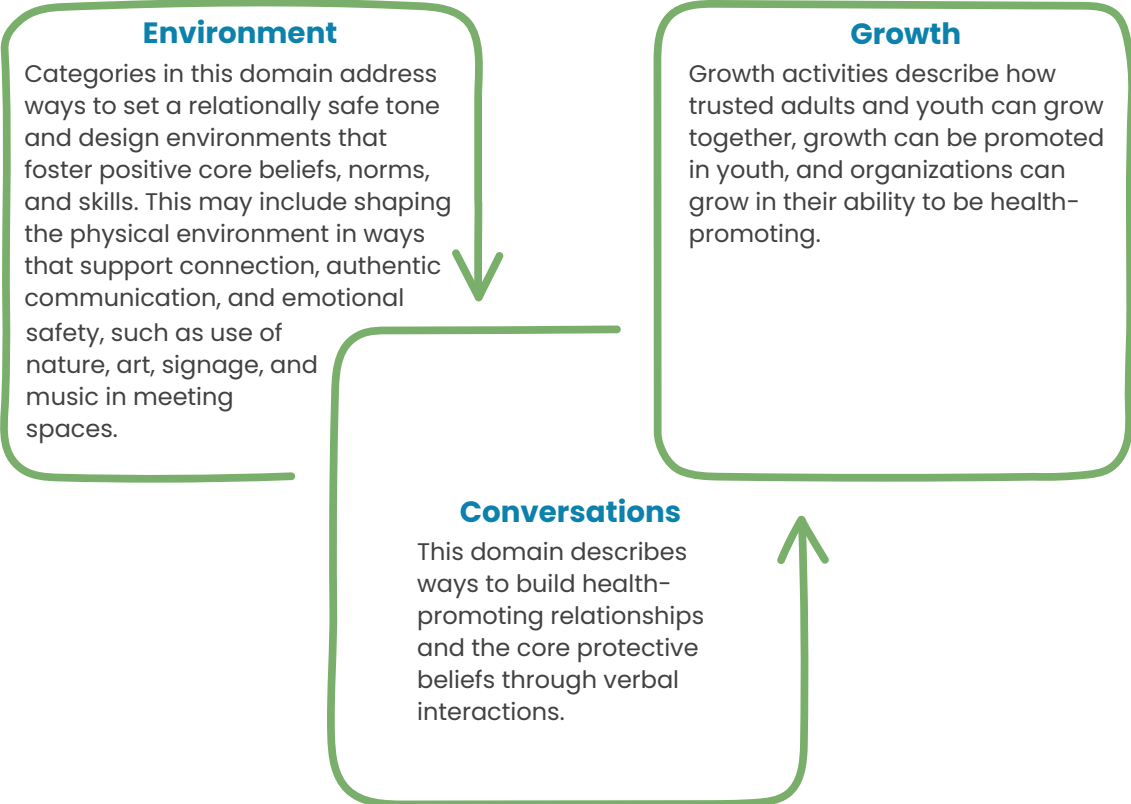
Youth sports offer a uniquely powerful context for promoting positive developmental and behavioral outcomes when coaches move beyond technical skill instruction and a sole focus on competition, to intentionally foster connection, belonging, and psychosocial growth in young athletes.¹⁸⁵⁻¹⁸⁶ A substantial body of research demonstrates that coach-athlete relationships grounded in trust, empathy, and consistent support can enhance self-esteem, resilience, emotional regulation, teamwork, leadership, and life skills that can go beyond sport.¹⁸⁷⁻¹⁹⁰ Coaches who adopt relational and developmentally informed approaches emphasizing social-emotional learning, psychological safety, and shared agency create conditions in which youth not only perform better athletically but also thrive personally and socially.^{186,191-193}

- **Relational coaching promotes core developmental outcomes.** High-quality coach-athlete relationships strengthen self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional well-being, all central to resilience and positive identity formation. Relational environments foster competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (the “Five Cs” of Positive Youth Development).¹⁹⁴
- **Coaches have a unique opportunity to create psychologically safe and supportive environments.** Coaches play a primary role in creating safe spaces that allow youth to take risks, make mistakes, and learn without fear of judgment. Consistent routines, clear expectations, and genuine care help athletes feel seen, supported, and emotionally regulated, enhancing both performance and personal growth.
- **Coaches can foster connection and protective beliefs through sports-related conversation.** Meaningful conversations, about effort, teamwork, setbacks, and respect help athletes develop internalized protective beliefs such as self-worth, belonging, and optimism. “Connection moments,” such as pre- or post-practice check-ins, affirm athletes’ value beyond performance and support identity development.
- **Coaches can integrate life skills and socio-emotional learning into coaching practice.** Coaches can intentionally embed life skills, such as goal setting, problem-solving, empathy, and communication, into drills, reflections, and team discussions. Programs emphasizing life skill transfer (e.g., Play It Smart, First Tee) demonstrate long-term benefits in school, personal relationships, and community participation.
- **Coaches can model growth mindset and co-agency for development beyond sport.** Coaches who model humility, perseverance, and empathy help normalize learning through failure and cultivate resilience. Emphasizing development over winning fosters autonomy and self-determination, helping athletes internalize motivation and apply lessons across life domains.

Each playbook illustrates the application of environmental strategies, specific facilitators of connection and/or micro-skills for adults in different roles to build protective beliefs in youth. For example, educators are naturally positioned as long-term role models and can engage kindness and curiosity, practice self-reflection, and grow self-awareness through classroom assignments and interactions. Law enforcement officers, such as school resource officers, uniquely integrate safety and care when promoting youth well-being, and often have opportunities to exercise nonjudgment while helping youth develop the beliefs “I can influence my life” and “I can overcome hard things.”

We encourage all readers to use the core content of the toolkit to support their development of the environmental strategies, connection facilitators, micro-skills, and skill promotion in youth. The guidance and examples provided are universally appropriate for trusted adults and provide an ideal foundation for using a health-promoting relationships approach.

The following playbooks begin with a description of how the health-promoting relationships approach applies to the specified role and offers concrete strategies for creating the environment, facilitating connection, and engaging micro-skills in that role’s context. Playbook examples are organized into three primary domains: environment, conversations, and growth.



Playbook examples reinforce the HPR *way of being* to cultivate the core protective beliefs or their interrelated beliefs. Since the specific protective skills youth need to develop are different for each person, the playbooks do not emphasize selecting which skills to develop in youth. Many of the examples shared DO create opportunities to support the development of protective skills, so we encourage you to refer to the *Develop skills in youth* section of the toolkit to identify the most appropriate skill for any particular moment.

We know that each adult and each youth vary in their capacity, preference, and expectations for connection and also experience different levels of risk vs. flourishing. Therefore, each adult’s and youth’s background should inform how the examples are adapted. Please look at the *Reaching the Full Potential of Health-Promoting Relationships* section of the toolkit for guidance on adapting the paradigm’s strategies to meet the varied needs of youth.



Playbook: Parent & Caregiver

(Page 1 of 2)



Parents and caregivers are often the most consistent, invested, influential, and trusted adults in the lives of youth. They provide youth a foundation for overall development including basic needs, emotional support and security, guidance, protection, education, socialization, independence, and role modeling of moral values and life skills.

Create the environment.

1. Ground your home in a shared mission, values and clear expectations.

- Establish, live out, and discuss family values (e.g., kindness, service, respect, faith, integrity) as a guide for daily choices.
- Co-create house rules that reflect shared values and promote well-being.
- Maintain consistent routines for meals, homework, and check-ins to provide stability.
- Help youth link daily decisions to their longer-term goals and beliefs.
- Create a family “I see you.” message board to highlight and celebrate positive actions and words. Bring the messages into family discussions, such as at mealtimes.
- Engage in creative interests like art or music to express appreciation and strengthen bonds.

2. Create rhythms of connection and belonging.

- Develop routines (shared meals, nightly check-ins, weekly rituals) that reinforce both love and meaning. Try a mix of broad questions (e.g., “How was your day?”) and more specific ones (e.g., “What made you laugh today?”).
- Build in spiritual or reflective practices: expressing gratitude, family prayer, sharing what you’ve noticed about your child’s strengths or growth, or brainstorming long-term hopes or callings and revisiting how everyday actions can help them reach their goals.
- Schedule service opportunities you can do together as a family that bring your family’s mission and goals to life, such as volunteering at a homeless shelter once a month.
- While getting ready in the mornings play music everyone enjoys to set the tone for a positive day.
- Leverage music or spiritual practices during times of stress as an opportunity to re-center on what is important to the family.

3. Model shared responsibility, coping strategies, facilitators of connection with youth and others, and how to navigate conflict individually and as a family with empathy and clarity.

- Role model facilitators of connection that may be particularly important for parents & caregivers, including self-awareness, respect, patience, love, nurturance, and vulnerability.
- Make it a priority to highlight the unique strengths of youth and how those strengths benefit the family unit.
- Be mindful of the emotional environment you create and the beliefs you are cultivating when working through conflict as a family unit. Ground discussions in family strengths, such as perseverance, honesty, and commitment to resolve the concern. Practice being politely assertive with youth and offer reassurances when appropriate.

Examples of Family Values

Character

- Integrity
- Honesty
- Courage
- Kindness
- Faith
- Health

Home

- Quality family time
- Sharing meals
- Service/Giving
- Punctuality
- Doing one’s best
- Unconditional love

Social

- Respect
- Connection
- Trust
- Compassion
- Gratitude
- Listen to understand



Playbook: Parent & Caregiver

(Page 2 of 2)

Have conversations.

1. Practice honest and caring communication.

- Share your perspective on what is healthy, even when it challenges youth.
- Balance honesty with compassion and show that your guidance comes from a place of care and not control.
- Reinforce that your love is unwavering even when you disagree.
- Connect decisions to what is meaningful and builds on their purpose.

"I believe in your ability to make good choices. I'll always be honest with you about what is healthy and what could harm you, because I want you to have every chance to thrive."

2. Show support and love in meaningful ways.

- Express love through words, gestures, and acknowledgement of achievements.
- Offer tangible reminders of care through notes, messages, or small acts of kindness.
- Be fully present and responsive during stressful times (at school, with friends, or other challenges).
- Advocate for youth in different ways such as when a sibling has wronged them or a school situation could benefit from parental involvement. When appropriate, ask them in what ways you can best advocate for them.

"I notice how much thought and effort you put into that. It means a lot to me to watch you grow into your own person."

"You've got this, and even when things are overwhelming, I will be here with you, not just for the easy parts."

3. Build connection, voice, and belonging.

- Share daily conversations about highs, lows, and something you are looking forward to.
- Reflect with youth on when they feel most connected or supported.
- Give youth meaningful choices and responsibilities in family decisions.
- Listen actively and respectfully to youth perspective.
- Create tech-free moments for uninterrupted connection (meals/walks).
- Give space for doubts, questions, and exploration of purpose and spirituality without judgment. Affirm that their voice matters in making family decisions.
- Ask about and share with each other what excites you about life.

"Your perspective matters to me, even if it's different from mine. It is important to me that you feel like this is your space to share honestly. You first and then we'll decide together."

"When you share your ideas, it helps us grow as a family."

4. Model and celebrate strengths, growth, resilience, & values.

- Notice and praise effort, persistence, and positive behavior.
- Honor youth interests, talents, and values.
- Model vulnerability by sharing your own challenges and growth when managing setbacks.
- Encourage supportive relationships with mentors, spiritual leaders, or peers who affirm their worth and growth.
- Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Highlight each youth's unique contributions to the family.
- Support problem-solving and coping skills during tough times.

"I notice how you didn't give up, even when it felt impossible. That determination will carry you far."

"The way you care for and serve others reflects a deep part of who you are. That gift is something the world really needs and is part of your purpose."

Grow together.

1. Participate fully in your youth's life.

- Respond promptly and attentively when youth seek your attention - make eye contact, minimize distractions, and show genuine interest.
- Engage in their hobbies and creative interests.
- Attend their events to show support.
- Plan shared experiences one-on-one or as a family to build connection.

2. Foster talents, skills, and responsibilities.

- Support youth in exploring their strengths and spirituality, reflecting on what matters to them and applying it in real life. Invite mutual feedback to foster growth.
- Assign meaningful responsibilities to build skills and confidence. Provide youth space to work through challenges and make mistakes. Support them in identifying lessons learned and solutions.
- Promote creativity, leadership, and service as ways to discover personal and family purpose.

3. Set shared goals and reflection practices as a family.

- Make connection, growth, and mutual support explicit family goals.
- Building habits of reflecting together on progress, challenges, and growth.

Playbook: Educator

(Page 1 of 2)



Educators and school staff are uniquely positioned to be trusted adults in the lives of youth given their consistent and structured contact with them throughout formative developmental periods. These touchpoints help educators and school staff observe changes, offer guidance, and create environments where students feel seen, safe, and valued. Their distinct role bridges home, school, and community contexts, positioning them as accessible mentors and role models whose influence enhances rather than replicates the influence of other trusted adults in the lives of youth.

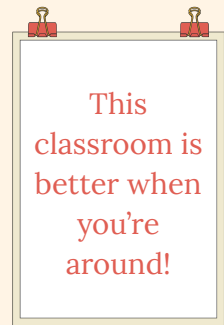
Create the environment.

1. Establish a safe, respectful, and empowering classroom and school culture.

- Co-create classroom norms that reflect shared values like respect, kindness, and responsibility. Invite students to shape school culture and share feedback with school leadership.
- Display messages that reinforce core beliefs (e.g., “This classroom is better when you’re in it” to affirm “I matter”).
- Model fairness and consistency to show students they are valued and capable.
- Connect classroom rules to bigger life lessons such as seizing the opportunity to learn and the long-term benefits of learning, keeping the classroom community safe and healthy, and that following the rules helps them engage with the world outside of the classroom.
- Offer opportunities for students to positively influence school environment (e.g., student councils, advisory groups, peer mentoring and mediation programs)
- Advocate for students when there are additional services they can benefit from or when they can benefit from teacher or staff involvement.
- Increase students’ sense of agency in communicating their needs. Find ways for them practice this in everyday situations, such as learning how to write a professional email, how to request something or advocate for themselves in conversation, or how to offer a genuine apology and ask for forgiveness when they have hurt someone.

2. Create rhythms of self-awareness, connection, and belonging.

- Invite students to reflect on how their actions align with their values and personal growth.
- Use consistent classroom rituals (i.e. morning huddles, daily check-ins, reflection circles) that signal that every student matters, stability, and opportunities for honest discussions in a safe environment.
- Incorporate reflection activities such as gratitude sharing or silent journaling with prompts about growth, purpose, or resilience.
- Keep a growth portfolio for each student to track and share moments of resilience and contribution.
- Celebrate students’ unique talents and effort that have contributed to the collective success of the class.
- Model humility, kindness, care, empathy, nurturance, and authenticity, as it is important for students to experience these facilitators of connection from educators.
- Apologize and ask forgiveness when needed to build trust.



SET THE TONE

“In this room, everyone’s voice carries weight. Even different opinions are valued. It’s okay to take risks here, because trying and failing is part of learning.”

“The expectations we have created together will help us all even beyond this school, because they help us grow into the kind of people who build trust with others and build community.”

SET THE TONE

“Let’s build some traditions as a class – maybe weekly shoutouts or reflections – so everyone has a chance to be seen and appreciated.”

“Before we leave today, share one thing you learned about yourself.”

“I know life outside of these school walls can be a lot, but I want you to know you have support here through myself and other resources available at the school.”



1. Normalize honest dialogue and listen deeply.

- Integrate brief check-ins focused on students' personal growth, challenges, or successes.
- Start class with a quick share, like one word or sentence about how students are feeling.
- Use a question box for anonymous student inquiries and respond weekly.
- Create space for personal storytelling of moments of resilience or overcoming challenges, encouraging active listening and presence among peers.
- Discuss common stressors (e.g., doing poorly on a test, worry prior to a test, or trying out for something new like a sports team, club, or council), strategies for gaining awareness on feelings as stress triggers (e.g., body sensations, thoughts), and share healthy coping strategies as a class.

2. Speak truth courageously and with respect, compassion and hope.

- Share hard truths about risks, boundaries, or consequences with empathy, reinforcing students' ability to grow and make wise choices.
- Discuss real-world case studies to explore short- and long-term consequences.
- Balance affirmations (e.g., naming a strength) with accountability when giving feedback.
- Use role-play to help students practice handling peer pressure and risky situations.
- Invite guest speakers to share stories of resilience and spark honest dialogue.
- Facilitate respectful debates to build empathy and evidence-based thinking.

3. Explore purpose, meaning, and values.

- Lead students through a "values exploration" exercise where students choose their top five personal values. Ask them to save their list somewhere they will remember and reference the list in future discussions and/or assignments.
- Assign a "passion project" tied to something meaningful to them (e.g., music, advocacy, community service, faith), with a presentation on their experience.
- Encourage reflection on moments of feeling most alive or strengths they admire in others and may want to grow in themselves. Have them talk about it in pairs or share with the class.
- Recognize and share each student's unique contributions and how they enrich the classroom.

"I may not have all the answers, but I'll always take your questions seriously."

"Let's pause. What I hear you saying is.... Did I get that right?"

"The truth is, choices have consequences – but so does courage, and you have it. I believe you're capable of making decisions that honor the person you want to become."

"This may feel uncomfortable, but leaning into it helps us grow and understand each other better. Let's practice slowing down and asking questions in a curious way. Even when we disagree, the way we treat each other matters – it's what makes our community strong."

"What are 3 things you need to start doing now to move towards the person you want to become in five years?"

"You are really strong at putting together arguments for or against a case. Have you thought about how you might use this in your future?"

"Purpose does not have to be grand – it just has to mean something to you and can start with something as simple as how you show up for people in your everyday life."

1. Co-create meaningful and purposeful learning experiences.

- Ask students how a project can be designed to reflect what matters to them.
- Let students lead assignments or project planning with educator guidance and connection to purpose.
- Link class work to shared values or future aspirations.

2. Be an active participant in students' worlds and interests.

- Attend student events or ask about their extracurricular activities.
- Integrate real-life examples from students' experiences into lessons.
- Invite students to present aspects of their outside life that are connected to classroom learning.
- Co-create safe after-school activities that reflect student interests or guide students in developing community-based activities or supporting community outreach events that align with shared values.

3. Foster collaboration, responsibility, and skill-building.

- Assign and rotate leadership roles and responsibilities, and invite student reflection on personal growth.
- Design group projects that emphasize teamwork, accountability, and reflection.
- Challenge students intellectually and debrief on strategies and lessons learned.
- Encourage peer recognition through shout-outs and gratitude sharing.
- Highlight positive coping strategies (e.g., listening to calming music) and their impact on peer relationships.

Playbook: Coalitions

(Page 1 of 2)



While parents and educators can influence youth every day, coalitions unite diverse partners – such as community leaders, health providers, law enforcement, faith groups, businesses, and youth themselves – into a consistent network of care, creating a broader environment in which trust, safety, and opportunity flourish. This collective presence ensures that young people see not only individual adults, but entire communities committed to their growth, belonging, and future. Coalitions, by aligning resources and amplifying supportive and protective messaging, can serve as trusted adults at a systems level. Coalitions also serve a critical role by strengthening coalition members’ competencies and their organizations’ infrastructures to support youth and activate their agency. One of the ways coalitions can do this is by modeling support and agency in action through the youth’s participation in the work of the coalition itself.

Create the environment.

1. Create safe, welcoming, and youth-centered spaces at coalition and community events.

- Co-create youth-led spaces (e.g., wellness zones) to show trust and partnership, with adults supporting behind the scenes.
- Design spaces that allow both extroverted and introverted youth to engage comfortably and demonstrate to youth that adults anticipated their needs. Post engaging messages (e.g., What values are important to you?) and have youth serve in expert roles that suit their interests and skills (e.g., more introverted youth may want to take on managing a social media account while more extroverted youth may want to attend outreach and fundraising events on behalf of the coalition).
- Affirm youth as valued contributors and leaders by creating a youth coalition/prevention club. Invite youth leaders to attend adult coalition meetings once a month, held at times and in locations (physical and/or virtual) that allow youth to participate.
- Communicate the coalition’s acceptance of and belief in youth as valued and contributing members and community leaders whose voices and ideas are important. Be intentional about giving them space to contribute during meetings and ask for their input in deliberations. Don’t single them out by always calling on youth first or last. Frequently ask them, “What do you think?” Limit use of their language/terms unless the relationship with them allows it.
- Model inclusion by uplifting voices from underrepresented groups.
- Onboard youth intentionally with mentorship, goal-sharing, and ongoing support.
- Provide space for youth to reflect on coalition work and share challenges and successes, and how coalition members can be sources of support.
- Offer letters of support and advocacy when youth need adult allies.

2. Ensure consistent language and positive messaging about youth across schools, health agencies, businesses, and media.

- Launch a “language matters” pledge to encourage strengths-based terms (“resilient youth”) and share a community guide to unify messaging.
- Partner with local media to train journalists on positive, inclusive youth coverage that avoids stereotypes and includes youth voices.

3. Publicly recognize and celebrate youth contributions and achievements.

- Host a “youth impact festival” to showcase peer mentoring groups, cultural or advocacy initiatives, or other community projects with adults attending as supporters.
- Recognize youth contributions through awards, leadership roles, and public acknowledgment.
- Involve youth in key coalition tasks like event planning or data work.
- Create a visible legacy by displaying youth achievements in coalition spaces.

Playbook: Coalitions

(Page 2 of 2)



Have conversations.

1. Host youth-led forums and listening sessions where adults hear directly from youth.

- Launch a “youth cabinet session” where young people present policy recommendations directly to city officials.
- Hold a listening session on mental health including breakout groups led by youth facilitators. Adults rotate between groups and practice listening without interrupting. At the end, the youth compile themes into a report which the coalition then transforms into action items.

2. Integrate a health-promoting relationship (HPR) philosophy into the coalition’s approach to working with youth.

- Train coalition members on health-promoting relationships: definition of a health-promoting relationship, facilitators of connection, micro-skills for trusted adults, skills for youth, and how to share information about HPR.
- Discuss a new facilitator of connection and micro-skill at each coalition meeting.
- After each coalition-youth event, invite honest feedback from the youth for adult members: Examples - *Were we fully present? Were we nonjudgmental? In what ways did we help to cultivate the belief that you matter? How can we improve?*

3. Facilitate intergenerational conversations and community events that strengthen relationships and mutual understanding.

- Host a shared community service or civic action project such as a United Way Day of Caring.
- Hold a heritage or cultural exchange event to hand down stories and highlight a community’s history across generations.
- As a coalition icebreaker, hold an intergenerational “day in my shoes” discussion.

Promote growth.

1. Mobilize and align the community.

- Use coalition influence to align resources and policies that support youth.
- Invite youth and members to share sources of strength (e.g., spirituality) and engage partners like faith-based groups.
- Host youth-led discussions to explore ways members can enhance youth engagement; form a “youth first” advisory group.
- Promote shared measures of connection and thriving across sectors through collaborative planning and assessment.



Potential Discussion with Youth Coalition

1. Which facilitators of connection are most important to us as a youth coalition?
2. Which ones are we doing well at?
3. Which ones need work?
4. What ideas might you have to enhance our ability to connect with one another and others?
5. Where are some of the natural opportunities to practice connecting meaningfully with others in our work?

Authenticity, Care, Empathy, Full Presence, Honesty, Humility, Kindness, Love, Nonjudgment, Nurturance, Patience, Respect, Self-Acceptance, Self-Alignment, Self-Awareness, Vulnerability

Playbook: Law Enforcement & Justice System

(Page 1 of 2)



Adults working in law enforcement and justice system roles (e.g. community police, school resource officers, youth corrections and probation staff) are uniquely positioned to both protect public safety and promote the well-being of their community. Professionals in these roles can bridge these duties by serving as trusted adults, helping shape positive youth development in both everyday interactions as well as moments of stress, crisis, or consequence.

Creating environments where youth interact with law enforcement and justice system professionals works best when we use developmentally- and trauma-informed approaches. While a full review of these approaches extends beyond the scope of this Playbook, we offer key ideas to help you get started.

1. Build trust with youth.

- Strengthen connection and build trust through regular, friendly interactions. Greet youth by name and follow up on past conversations.
- Show you are an available source of support by engaging youth in places they gather (e.g., school and community events, graduation ceremonies, cafeteria).
- Accept invitations to speak to youth about topics unique to your role (e.g., career path, safety tips, conflict resolution strategies).
- Where relevant, invite youth to help shape safety expectations in their environment (e.g., within classrooms, group therapy rooms).
- Be fully present during times of stress for youth and attempt to follow-up later and check in on how they are doing. This can offer the stability and care they may need.
- Keep your word as often as possible to cultivate the belief that "I matter.", and if you cannot, follow-up with them and let them know the reason why.
- If applicable, create a welcoming office environment (e.g., open door, youth artwork, positive messaging, fidget items) that feels accessible, safe, and supportive.

2. Model nonjudgment, fairness, and dignity in every interaction.

- When a youth makes a poor choice, show care and nonjudgment by seeking to understand what need they are trying to get met, and the context informing their decision.
- Acknowledge discomfort certain activities, such as discipline, monitoring, or searches, may cause. Foster respect by describing what you are doing and why and checking in to address concerns.
- Ask about strengths and connect youth with meaningful service opportunities that showcase those skills (e.g., art projects, vocational activities, mentoring younger kids).
- When appropriate, communicate at eye level to foster respect and connection.
- Lead by example, inspiring through authenticity rather than authority.

Create the environment.

1. Use accountability conversations to build core beliefs and mitigate shame.

- Maintain a calm, deliberate tempo in your language and behavior to help youth fully understand what is being said.
- Let youth choose the time and setting for difficult conversations when appropriate.
- Recognize strengths before addressing harm, framing accountability as a form of agency.
- After a violation, explore their thought process, discuss impact on themselves and others, and invite them to propose a solution.
- When addressing minor issues, explain the issue clearly, listen fully, and affirm their value regardless of the decision they made.
- Use check-ins to affirm worth and cultivate the belief "I matter.", not to monitor behavior.

"How are you doing on the goals you set for yourself? What seems to be the hardest part right now?"

"We can write this as a violation, or you can take a corrective step by enrolling in the workshop. I personally believe in you, which is why I'd encourage you take the path toward growing through this. Which works best for you?"

"You are more than this choice. Here's why this matters, and here's how we can move forward."

Have conversations.



Have conversations, cont.

2. Normalize active listening and overcoming hard things.

- Be fully present, maintain eye contact, and show respect for what youth are experiencing.
- Share stories of youth resilience to inspire hope and growth.
- Remind them of the last time they overcame hard things.
- Pause and listen during emotionally charged moments, asking how they feel.
- Affirm strong emotions as valid and emphasize support over punishment.
- Acknowledge emotional regulation and decision-making are continuing to develop throughout adolescence and into adulthood.
- Model humility and self-regulation, showing that adults also work on emotional control.

"Way to go! You've completed two steps already – that proves you can handle tough things. Let's plan your next one. What do you think you need to get through this?"

"Let's both take a few deep breaths before we talk. It helps me think more clearly, and maybe it could do the same for you."

3. Reinforce hope and future orientation.

- Model and share your own moral values. Share why you got into law enforcement or justice system work and encourage them to talk about their own values and goals.
- Help youth write down a short-term personal goal (like finishing a program or applying for a job), revisit it at each encounter with them, and celebrate progress.
- Celebrate as many small successes as possible for a youth, even if that means celebrating a day, or a week without a write-up. This will foster competence, self-efficacy, and hope.
- End interactions with affirmation and connection.

"Even though you broke the rule, you still matter to this community. I hope to see you again this week."

"I'll check back tomorrow to see how you're doing. You're not on your own in this."

"There are many people in your corner, including me."

Promote growth.

1. Turn consequences into opportunities for growth, reflection, and repair.

- Frame challenges as growth opportunities. Discuss their sources of support and strength, and help them make a plan to lean on those assets.
- Model supportive behavior during tough times and help youth connect with resources they choose. Activate their agency by having them take the lead in selecting and/or engaging these resources.
- Introduce youth to mentors or programs, and follow up on their experience.
- Involve families in goal-setting or connect youth with ongoing community support.
- Use restorative conversations after incidents (e.g., shoplifting) to reflect on impact and choices.
- Include restorative practices like peer mediation or service projects in responses to violations.

2. Help youth practice coping, decision-making, and problem-solving skills in real time.

- Check in after a difficult moment. Listen, and offer support and validation.
- Acknowledge youth efforts, even small ones, to let them know they are seen and cared for.
- Teach and model stress resets like deep breathing. Allow youth time to self-regulate before engaging or responding.
- Invite youth to name and explore their emotions, using open-ended questions and empathetic listening to build trust. Supporting youth in naming their emotions and how to respond builds their skills for managing their feelings.
- When speaking and engaging with a youth that is angry, normalize their feeling and share that anger is often the outward expression of another internal emotion.
- Role-play common stress scenarios and let youth try different responses, reinforcing that they can handle making healthy choices in challenging situations.

"I know that situation was hard. How are you doing now?"

"I saw you take a deep breath and try again. That took a lot of strength. How did that work for you?"



Healthcare professionals – such as physicians, nurses, behavioral health providers, and counselors – provide essential preventative care and treatment to youth. Often, these relationships involve multiple interactions throughout a young person’s development, providing healthcare professionals with a unique opportunity to integrate a health-promoting approach that achieves protection, prevention, and flourishing across all aspects of youth development.

Create the environment.

1. Develop shared goals and expectations.

- Collaborate with youth to set meaningful care goals that support autonomy and positive development.
- Co-create treatment plans that reflect their values and preferences.
- Help youth link care decisions to broader life goals.
- Explore spirituality or reflective practices (e.g., journaling, mindfulness) as sources of strength, and integrate them into care when relevant. Doing so aligns with professional standards and best practices.

2. Foster a nurturing patient experience.

- Design welcoming spaces that reflect youth preferences (e.g., music, snacks, sensory tools).
- Share uplifting messages through media (e.g., television, posters) that reinforce protective beliefs.
- Offer flexible appointment times that respect youth schedules.
- Provide break areas with movement and self-directed activities (e.g., reading, puzzles, games) when peer interaction is limited.

3. Advocate for youth when appropriate.

- Communicate with parents/caregivers on behalf of youth (with their permission) when treatment adherence is an issue.
- Support youth preferences in care decisions that are consistent with clinical recommendations.
- Assertively pursue steps to ensure youth receive optimal care. For example, help secure access to needed specialist services by reaching out directly when necessary.

4. Innovate to meet patient needs.

- Develop new programs or unique solutions that align with the treatment focus and healing (e.g., healthy cooking classes, patient vegetable gardens).
- For providers in more traditional medical settings, advocate for longer appointment times to allow more time for relationship-building.
- Consider ways to streamline services received during appointments and who those services are provided by to allow as much face-to-face unstructured time for relationship building. For example, sending screening measures via a portal to be completed prior to the appointment.

Have conversations.

1. Practice honest and caring communication.

- Show full presence, patience, and respect to create a safe space for open dialogue, especially around sensitive topics.
- Be transparent about services, procedures, and confidentiality to build trust.
- Share professional insights honestly, linking risky behaviors to youth’s values and goals. In the spirit of the youth’s autonomy and collaboration, ask permission first.
- Balance honesty with compassion to show genuine care.
- Validate concerns with empathy (e.g., “I can see why that’s difficult”).
- Respond to disclosures of risky behavior with nonjudgment and appreciation for their trust (e.g., “Thank you for sharing this”).
- Ask permission to discuss healthier alternatives that align more closely with their values and goals.

“Thank you for trusting me with this. I know it’s not easy to talk about. How does taking care of this issue fit with what you want for yourself?”

“Before we start, I want to make sure you understand what we’re doing and why. Is that okay with you?”

“I am glad you are focusing on getting protein to help your muscles develop. Can I share my perspective as your doctor? I care about you and am concerned because this diet can really impact your kidneys.”

“What are some things you do when you feel stressed? Some youth your age prefer reaching out to a friend, going for a walk, or other social or physical activities. What are your thoughts about those options?”



Have conversations, cont.

2. Show support in meaningful ways.

- Use kind words and gestures to recognize progress and achievements. The more specific, the better.
- Communicate in age-appropriate ways, validate concerns, and support informed decisions.
- Reassure youth they're not alone—you're sharing responsibility for their care.
- Consider offering peer support groups for youth with similar needs.
- Problem-solve WITH the youth rather than FOR the youth. Ask them to come up with possible solutions, then offer to share your ideas.

3. Build connection, voice, and mattering.

- Build rapport by exploring interests and sharing appropriate personal insights.
- Reflect on when youth feel most supported in care.
- Emphasize their role in decision-making to the greatest degree possible.
- Welcome questions and feedback on how to improve, and incorporate the feedback they offer.
- Offer follow-ups when time is limited to ensure all concerns are addressed.

4. Model and celebrate growth and resilience.

- Notice and praise specific efforts, persistence, and positive behaviors.
- Reframe health-related setbacks as learning opportunities to strengthen problem-solving and coping skills.

"I noticed you've been consistent with [medication/appointments/self-care]—that takes real commitment. That type of dedication will serve you well in life."

"I hear your struggles and see how hard you're working on this. Let's work on this together and see if we can come up with some next steps that feel right to you."

"It's really important to me that we get to know each other and you feel comfortable with me. What's something most people don't know about you?"

"What helps you feel heard when you're here? Is there anything I do that makes it easier or harder to open up?"

"You're the expert on your own body so you get to decide. I have some ideas, but I want to hear what you think first."

"It's okay to feel this way, a lot of people feel nervous about that. I'm really proud of you bringing it up so we can find ways to work through this."

"I appreciate how you handled that situation, and you didn't give up – that shows real strength and commitment."

"Mistakes are how we learn what works for us. We build resilience every time we try again after something doesn't work out. How might you approach this differently next time?"

Promote growth.

1. Empower youth to take ownership of their health.

- Equip youth with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to actively participate in their healthcare decisions and self-management.
- When developmentally appropriate, invite parent/caregivers to step away during portions of the appointments and coach them on supporting their child's growing autonomy while balancing their need for guidance.

2. Cultivate a health-promoting workplace culture.

- Help staff build confidence in discussing tough topics (e.g., suicidal thoughts and actions, sexual health, substance use) by normalizing discomfort, modeling approaches, and offering practice with feedback.
- Promote staff well-being by recognizing their value, providing burnout prevention resources, and fostering team connection.

Playbook: Sports Coaches

(Page 1 of 2)



Coaches hold a distinct place in the lives of young people, guiding them through experiences that blend challenge, teamwork, and growth. Unlike many other adults, coaches witness moments of triumph and disappointment in real time, creating powerful opportunities to shape how young athletes respond to success, failure, and effort. Through this role, coaches can cultivate the core beliefs by creating a positive team environment, engaging in meaningful conversations, and fostering opportunities for growth and resilience. By modeling respect, integrity, and encouragement, coaches become trusted figures who affirm a young person's worth, strengthen their confidence, and inspire resilience on and off the field.

Create the environment.

1. Recognize and celebrate the whole person.

- Celebrate non-performance contributions like teamwork and empathy.
- Attend events outside sports (e.g., school concerts, other league competitions, volunteer activities) to show you value athletes beyond the game.
- Highlight assists and collaboration during scrimmages.
- Review and celebrate personal goals before each event.
- Build in time to debrief practices and games, emphasizing life lessons like humility and respect.
- Frame team rules as life skills.
- Collaborate with other coaches to model connection and relationship-building, providing athletes an opportunity to see first-hand how these facilitators can enhance relationships.

2. Build psychological safety and healthy norms.

- Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Find ways for each athlete to contribute meaningfully and feel valued (e.g., leading drills, coordinating ball pickups, keeping time for the team). Have youth rotate a position such as a "spirit" captain that helps mediate between teammates when needed and serve alongside the coach eliciting team feedback on how everyone is feeling following events.
- Communicate your belief and acceptance in youth in every interaction.
- Create team norms for constructive peer feedback.
- Explore sources of strength and hope, making healthy coping part of team culture.

3. Reinforce ethical behavior and empathy in real time.

- Highlight acts of fairness and teamwork to emphasize character over results.
- Share stories of sportsmanship and discuss real-life applications.
- Encourage team rituals that celebrate integrity and growth, like acknowledging a teammate who demonstrated humility during a game.
- Explore ethical choices through scenarios and discussions on values.
 - Pose scenarios to discuss various values and sportsmanship principles such as integrity and courage.
 - Discuss balancing competitiveness with respect for others, connecting choices to long-term character development.
- Help athletes set personal behavior standards and check in regularly.

"If you see a teammate bending the rules, how would you respond?"

"How does it make you feel when your team is overmatched and the opposing team mercilessly runs up the score?"

*"The other team is down a player. What should be our play here?
How does that choice fit with our team's values?"*

Playbook: Sports Coaches

(Page 2 of 2)



Have conversations.

1. Foster connection, reflection and self-awareness.

- After tough moments, invite athletes to reflect and share how you can better support them.
- Foster team discussions on personal growth and lessons learned.
- Reflect together on effort and mindset patterns.

2. Connect choices to health and performance.

- Discuss how sleep, nutrition, and mindset choices affect both sport and life outcomes.
- Help athletes link lessons from sport to school, work, or family challenges.

"What did you notice about how you reacted under pressure? I was really struck when you reached out to your team for support. In doing that, you showed courage and really lived up to our values of relying on one another."

"You seemed a bit off today. I'm curious what's going on for you? When you come back tomorrow, what strategies do you think can help?"

"You took on a tough role today in leading the team out there. What did that role teach you about yourself, and your impact on others?"

"Which of your personal strengths off the field do you bring to the team?"

"Your teachers shared that your grades are starting to dip a bit. Out here, all I see is grit and perseverance. I'm curious how your approach here can extend to your schoolwork."

Promote growth.

1. Empower leadership and agency.

- Allow athletes to design practice drills or lead team warm-ups.
- Create a rotating youth assistant coach role where athletes can explore different coaching positions.
- Facilitate team discussion and decisions on rituals, goals, or conflict resolution.
- Debrief leadership or other experiences with reflection questions.

2. Turn disappointment into structured growth opportunities.

- Discuss losses outside the moment. No team wins every match forever – disappointment will come, how will we face it and learn from it?
- Let youth know they can get through hard times as a team. Model shared responsibility.

3. Build peer support, mentoring, and life skills.

- Pair older athletes with younger teammates for skill-building and guidance.
- Use team accountability partners to check in on goals and well-being.
- Pairing weaker athletes with stronger ones creates powerful opportunities for both. It fosters agency and the belief that "I have support". This type of pairing approach can also be used within the coaching staff, normalizing humility and the practice of seeking and offering help, support, encouragement, and nurturing.

Sportsmanship Principles

- Respect everyone.
- Encourage teammates.
- Always do your best.
- Learn from mistakes and get back in the game.
- Play fair.
- End with a handshake.

"The team earns the wins, the coach takes the losses. I learn more about what I can coach them on from each loss."

-Soccer Coach

REFERENCES

1. Murthy VH. Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation. Published online 2023. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>
2. Holt-Lunstad J. Why social relationships are important for physical health: a systems approach to understanding and modifying risk and protection. *Annu Rev Psychol.* 2018;69(1):437–458. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011902
3. Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States. *American Psychologist.* 2017;72(6):517–530. doi:10.1037/amp0000103
4. Pekel K, Roehlkepartain EC, Syvertsen AK, et al. Finding the fluoride: examining how and why developmental relationships are the active ingredient in interventions that work. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry.* 2018;88(5):493–502. doi:10.1037/ort0000333
5. Bethell C, Jones J, Gombojav N, et al. Positive childhood experiences and adult mental and relational health in a statewide sample: associations across adverse childhood experiences levels. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2019;173(11):e193007. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3007
6. Kallapiran K, Suetani S, Cobham V, et al. Impact of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs): A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies. *Child Psychiatry Hum Dev.* Published online January 6, 2025. doi:10.1007/s10578-024-01807-x
7. Ashton K, Davies AR, Hughes K, et al. Adult support during childhood: a retrospective study of trusted adult relationships, sources of personal adult support and their association with childhood resilience resources. *BMC Psychol.* 2021;9:101. doi:10.1186/s40359-021-00601-x
8. Frederick J, Spratt T, Devaney J. Supportive relationships with trusted adults for children and young people who have experienced adversities: implications for social work service provision. *The British Journal of Social Work.* 2023;53(6):3129–3145. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcad107
9. YOUNGMINDS, UK YOUTH. Someone to Turn to: Being a Trusted Adult for Young People. Accessed July 1, 2025. <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/by3o0aru/someone-to-turn-to-report.pdf>
10. Relationship. In: *Oxford English Dictionary.* Oxford University Press; 2025. Accessed March 8, 2025. <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=relationship>
11. Health Promotion. World Health Organization. 2025. Accessed March 8, 2025. <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/about/how-we-work/programmes/health-promotion>
12. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Focus on Prevention. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 10-4120. Published online Revised 2020.
13. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General. Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Published online November 2016.
14. Developmental Relationships Framework. Search Institute. 2025. Accessed March 8, 2025. <https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>
15. Advancing Social and Emotional Learning. CASEL. 2025. <https://casel.org/>
16. Bethell CD, Gombojav N, Whitaker RC. Family resilience and connection promote flourishing among US children, even amid adversity. *Health Affairs.* 2019;38(5):729–737. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05425
17. Developmental Services Group, Inc. Protective Factors Against Delinquency. Published online 2015. https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/protective_factors_against_delinquency.pdf
18. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide. *Suicide Prevention.* April 25, 2024. Accessed March 9, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/risk-factors/index.html>
19. Moore KA, Bethell CD, Murphey D, Martin MC, Beltz M. Flourishing From the Start: What Is It and How Can It Be Measured? Published online March 2017. <https://cms.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-16FlourishingFromTheStart-1.pdf>
20. Oxford University Press. Trust. In: *Oxford English Dictionary.* Oxford University Press; 2024.
21. Oxford University Press. Belief. In: *Oxford English Dictionary.* Oxford University Press; 2025.
22. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Risk and Protective Factors. *Youth Violence Prevention.* March 12, 2024. Accessed March 9, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/youth-violence/risk-factors/index.html>
23. Davis T. What is Well-Being? Definition, Types, and Well-Being Skills. *Psychology Today.* May 21, 2024. Accessed September 4, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-for-happiness/201901/what-is-well-being-definition-types-and-well-being-skills?msocid=3c0dc0f6a8ff608715eed406a9e3613c>
24. Peppard L, American Psychiatric Nurses Association. Connection Paradigm Toolkit. Published online October 2024. Accessed March 11, 2025. <https://www.apna.org/connectiontoolkit/>
25. Belief. In: *Merriam-Webster.Com.* 2011. Accessed October 23, 2025. <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
26. American Psychological Association. Dictionary of Psychology. 2023. <https://dictionary.apa.org/>
27. Padilla-Walker LM, Hardy SA, Christensen KJ. Adolescent hope as a mediator between parent-child connectedness and adolescent outcomes. *The Journal of Early Adolescence.* 2011;31(6):853–879. doi:10.1177/0272431610376249
28. Connors MH, Halligan PW. Revealing the cognitive neuroscience of belief. *Front Behav Neurosci.* 2022;16:926742. doi:10.3389/fnbeh.2022.926742
29. Tamblyn A, Skouteris H, North A, et al. Physical and sensory environment interventions to support children's social and emotional development in early childhood education and care settings: a systematic review. *Early Child Development and Care.* 2023;193(5):708–724. doi:10.1080/03004430.2022.2152017
30. Sancassiani F, Pintus E, Holte A, et al. Enhancing the emotional and social skills of the youth to promote their wellbeing and positive development: a systematic review of universal school-based randomized controlled trials. *CPEMH.* 2015;11(1):21–40. doi:10.2174/1745017901511010021
31. Ferguson KT, Cassells RC, MacAllister JW, et al. The physical environment and child development: an international review. *Int J Psychol.* 2013;48(4):437–468. doi:10.1080/00207594.2013.804190
32. Komro KA, Flay BR, Biglan A; Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium. Creating nurturing environments: a science-based framework for promoting child health and development within high-poverty neighborhoods. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev.* 2011;14(2):111–134. doi:10.1007/s10567-011-0095-2

REFERENCES

33. Jaffe J, Loebach J. Fostering youth-enabling environments: a participatory affordance-capability framework for the development and use of youth-engaged environmental assessments. *Youth & Society*. 2024;56(1):164-192. doi:10.1177/0044118X221145713
34. Corry, M, Leavey, G. Adolescent trust in the healthcare provider relationship: a review of the literature. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 2017;22(10). doi:10.1177/1359105315624755
35. Bolton-King, M. I Am Not Any Greater than You Are": Cultivation of Humility in Higher Education through Mentoring. *Innovative Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-024-09759-9>
36. Authenticity. *Psychology Today*. July 22, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/authenticity#how-to-be-authentic>
37. Watson J. *Nursing: Human Science and Human Care: A Theory of Nursing*. National League for Nursing; 1988.
38. Kuntarti, RY, Umar J, Irawati D. Concept analysis of caring personality for nursing: a review. *JSSH*. 2020;28(4). doi:10.47836/pjssh.28.4.01
39. Kristenson S. 13 Ways to be a More Caring Person. *Happier Human*. September 13, 2022. Accessed August 11, 2024. <https://www.happierhuman.com/be-caring/#:~:text=13%20Ways%20to%20Be%20a%20More%20Caring%20Person,media%20in%20a%20meaningful%20way.%20...%20More%20items>
40. Oxford University Press. Empathetic. In: *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press; 2024.
41. McLaren K. The 6 Essential Aspects of Empathy. *Psychology Today*. July 24, 2024. Accessed September 2, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/on-emotions-and-empathy/202406/the-6-essential-aspects-of-empathy>
42. Abramson A. Cultivating empathy. *Monitor on Psychology*. 2021;52(8). Accessed September 2, 2024. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/11/feature-cultivating-empathy>
43. Edelstein B. On Presence: Engaging Deeply with Life. *Psychology Today*. February 14, 2023. Accessed August 12, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/authentic-engagement/202302/on-presence>
44. Brenner A. 7 Ways to Practice Being in the Present Moment. *Psychology Today*. May 30, 2019. Accessed August 12, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-flux/201905/7-ways-practice-being-in-the-present-moment>
45. Positive Mind Works. 7 Ways to be More Present When Talking to Someone. *Positive Mind Works*. October 16, 2023. Accessed August 12, 2024. <https://www.positivemindworks.co/7-ways-to-be-more-present-when-talking-to-someone/>
46. Oxford University Press. Honest. In: *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press; 2024.
47. Aten J. Striving towards the Virtue of Honesty. *Psychology Today*. February 6, 2021. Accessed August 14, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-resilience/202102/striving-towards-the-virtue-honesty>
48. ProWriting Aid Team. 100+ Character Traits of an Honest Person. *ProWritingAid*. September 19, 2023. <https://prowritingaid.com/honest-character-traits>
49. Le BM, Chopik WJ, Shimshock CJ, et al. When the truth helps and when it hurts: how honesty shapes well-being. *Current Opinion in Psychology*. 2022;46:101397. doi:10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101397
50. Schaffner AK. What is Humility & Why Is It Important? *PositivePsychology.com*. August 27, 2020. Accessed August 17, 2024. <https://positivepsychology.com/humility/>
51. Worthington, Jr. E, Davis D, Hook J. *Handbook of Humility: Theory, Research, and Applications*. Routledge; 2017.
52. Maldonado T, Vera D, Spangler WD. Unpacking humility: leader humility, leader personality, and why they matter. *Business Horizons*. 2022;65(2):125-137. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.032
53. Van Rongeren D. How to Become More Humble. *Psychology Today*. August 18, 2020. Accessed August 16, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/meaning-making/202008/how-to-become-more-humble>
54. Don Emerson Davis, Jr, N J. Measuring Humility and Its Positive Effects. *APS Observer*. 2013;26(8). <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/measuring-humility-and-its-positive-effects>
55. *Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*. 3rd edition. American Nurses Association; 2022.
56. Tangney JP. *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. Oxford University Press; 2009.
57. Dictionary.com. Kind. In: *Dictionary.Com*. Dictionary.com; 2024. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/kind>
58. Davis T. Kindness: Definition, Ideas, & Examples. *Berkeley Well-Being Institute*. 2024. Accessed August 18, 2024. <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/kindness.html>
59. Miller K. What is Kindness in Psychology? *PositivePsychology.com*. May 21, 2019. Accessed August 18, 2024. <https://positivepsychology.com/character-strength-kindness/>
60. Cousineau T. *The Kindness Cure: How the Science of Compassion Can Heal Your Heart & Your World*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc; 2018.
61. Oxford University Press. Loving. In: *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press; 2024.
62. Hegi KE, Bergner RM. What is love? An empirically-based essentialist account. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. 2010;27(5):620-636. doi:10.1177/0265407510369605
63. Davis T. What is Love? *Berkeley Well-Being Institute*. 2024. Accessed August 18, 2024. <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/what-is-love.html>
64. Nortje A. Harlow's Monkey Experiments: 3 Findings about Attachment. *Positivepsychology.com*. January 20, 2021. Accessed August 18, 2024. <https://positivepsychology.com/harlow-experiment/>
65. Little BR, Frost DM. Aspects of Love. In: Hojjat M, Cramer D, eds. *Positive Psychology of Love*. Oxford University Press; 2013:162-176. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199791064.003.0012
66. Chapman GD. *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*. Northfield Publishing; 2024.
67. Nonjudgmental. In: *Merriam-Webster Open Dictionary Online*. 2024. Accessed August 20, 2024. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nonjudgmental>
68. Why Should a Counselor be Non-judgmental? *Processing Therapy*. 2024. Accessed August 20, 2024. <https://processingtherapy.com/why-should-a-counsellor-be-non-judgmental/>

REFERENCES



69. Asuncion M. 3 Ways to Practice Non-Judgment (and Why it Matters). *Psychology Today*. January 29, 2023. Accessed August 20, 2024. <https://www.trackinghappiness.com/how-to-practice-non-judgment/>
70. Oxford University Press. *Nurturing*. In: *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press; 2024.
71. Proulx K, Lenzi-Weisbecker R, Hatch R, et al. Nurturing care during COVID-19: a rapid review of early evidence. *BMJ Open*. 2022;12(6):e050417. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-050417
72. Goldsmith B. 10 Ways to Nurture Your Relationship. *Psychology Today*. May 4, 2012. Accessed September 4, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/emotional-fitness/201205/10-ways-to-nurture-your-relationship?msocid=076ae38b7c126a5732abf14e7d676b25>
73. Schnitker SA. An examination of patience and well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 2012;7(4):263–280. doi:10.1080/17439760.2012.697185
74. Bernhard T. Impatient? Why and How to Practice Patience. *Psychology Today*. May 20, 2013. Accessed August 31, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/turning-straw-into-gold/201305/impatient-why-and-how-to-practice-patience>
75. Ohwovoriole T. How to Be More Patient. *Verywell Mind*. August 25, 2022. Accessed August 31, 2024. <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-be-more-patient-6361682>
76. Oxford University Press. *Respectful*. In: *Oxford Dictionary*. Oxford University Press; 2024.
77. Dillon RS. *Respect* (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). *Stanford.edu*. Published 2018. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/>
78. Hwang R. 15 Ways to Show Respect for Others (Professional & Personal). *Science of People*. Published March 18, 2024. <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/how-to-respect-others/>
79. Hannum K. The power of respect. Center for Creative Leadership. Published November 20, 2022. Accessed August 31, 2024. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/the-power-of-respect/>
80. Goleman D. *Emotional Intelligence*. Iztok-Zapad Publishing House; 2005.
81. Eurich T. What self-awareness Really Is (and How to Cultivate it). *Harvard Business Review*. Published January 4, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it>
82. Klusman K, Nichols AL, Curtin N, Langer J, Orehek E. Self-connection and well-being: development and validation of a self-connection scale. *Euro J Social Psych*. 2022;52(1):18–45. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2812
83. Carden J, Jones RJ, Passmore J. Defining self-awareness in the context of adult development: a systematic literature review. *Journal of Management Education*. 2022;46(1):140–177. doi:10.1177/1052562921990065
84. Miller K. Building self-awareness: 16 activities and tools for meaningful change. *Positive Psychology*. Published March 13, 2020. <https://positivepsychology.com/building-self-awareness-activities/>
85. Klusman K, Curtin N, Langer J, et al. The importance of awareness, acceptance, and alignment with the self: a framework for understanding self-connection. *Eur J Psychol*. 2022;18(1):120–131. doi:10.5964/ejop.3707
86. Pillay S. Greater self-acceptance improves emotional well-being - Harvard Health Blog. *Harvard Health Blog*. Published May 16, 2016. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/greater-self-acceptance-improves-emotional-well-201605169546>
87. Klusman, K. The Key to a Life Well-Lived. Presented at TEDxNashville; 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBcB1f7sVZI>
88. Bruk A, Scholl SG, Bless H. Beautiful mess effect: self–other differences in evaluation of showing vulnerability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 2018;115(2):192–205. doi:10.1037/pspa0000120
89. Rosenberg J. How to Be More Vulnerable and Authentic. *Psychology Today*. August 15, 2020. Accessed September 2, 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/emotional-mastery/202008/how-to-be-more-vulnerable-and-authentic>
90. Brown B. The Power of Vulnerability. Presented at TED. June 2010. Accessed September 2, 2024. https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability?subtitle=en
91. London M, Sessa VI, Shelley LA. Developing self-awareness: Learning processes for self- and interpersonal growth. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*. 2023;10(1):261–288.
92. Ciarrochi J, Kashdan TB, Leeson P, et al. On being aware and accepting: a one-year longitudinal study into adolescent well-being. *Journal of Adolescence*. 2011;34(4):695–703. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.09.003
93. Prilleltensky I, Prilleltensky O. *The Mattering Wheel*. In: *How People Matter Why It Affects Health, Happiness, Love, Work, and Society*. Cambridge University Press; 2021:11–24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/978108979405.002>
94. Mercurio Z. *The Power of Mattering: How Leaders Can Create a Culture of Significance*. 1st ed. Harvard Business Review Press; 2025.
95. Korhonen M. *Resilience: Overcoming Challenges and Moving on Positively*. National Aboriginal Health Organization; 2007. http://www.naho.ca/documents/it/2007_Inuit_Resilience_Book.pdf
96. Davis AL, McQuillin SD. Supporting autonomy in youth mentoring relationships. *Journal Community Psychology*. 2022;50(1):329–347. doi:10.1002/jcop.22567
97. Damiani-Taraba G, Sky I, Hegler D, et al. The listen to me project: creating lasting changes in voice and participation for children in care through a youth-led project. *Child & Youth Services*. 2018;39(1):75–95. doi:10.1080/0145935X.2018.1446825
98. Flett GL. Mattering matters in youth suicidality: implications for implementing in practice. *Child Protection and Practice*. 2024;2:100041. doi:10.1016/j.chipro.2024.100041
99. Carey RL, Polanco C, Blackman H. Black adolescent boys’ perceived school mattering: from marginalization and selective love to radically affirming relationships. *J of Research on Adolesc*. 2022;32(1):151–169. doi:10.1111/jora.12706
100. Evans SD. Youth sense of community: voice and power in community contexts. *Journal Community Psychology*. 2007;35(6):693–709. doi:10.1002/jcop.20173
101. Eccles JS, Gootman JA, eds. *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. National Academy Press; 2002. doi:10.17226/10022
102. Laursen B, Faur S. What does it mean to be susceptible to influence? a brief primer on peer conformity and developmental changes that affect it. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*. 2022;46(3):222–237. doi:10.1177/01650254221084103
103. American Psychological Association. *Building your resilience*. <https://www.apa.org>. 2020. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/building-your-resilience>

REFERENCES

104. Grossman JB, Bulle MJ. Review of what youth programs do to increase the connectedness of youth with adults. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2006;39(6):788-799. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.08.004
105. Arnold M. From context to outcomes: a thriving model for 4-H youth development programs. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension*. 2018;6(1). doi:10.54718/NBNL5438
106. National Academic of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth*. The National Academies Press; 2019.
107. SAMHSA. *Talk. They Hear You.*® Campaign. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2019. <https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you>
108. Nutbeam D. Health promotion glossary. *Health Promotion International*. 1998;13(4):349-364. doi:10.1093/heapro/13.4.349
109. World Health Organization. (1986). *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion: First International Conference on Health Promotion Ottawa*, 21 November 1986.
110. Hecht CA, Yeager DS, Dweck CS, et al. Beliefs, affordances, and adolescent development: lessons from a decade of growth mindset interventions. In: *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*. Vol 61. Elsevier; 2021:169-197. doi:10.1016/bs.acdb.2021.04.004
111. Jiang X, Mueller CE, Paley N. A systematic review of growth mindset interventions targeting Youth social-emotional outcomes. *School Psychology Review*. 2024;53(3):251-272. doi:10.1080/2372966X.2022.2151321
112. Tsang SKM, Hui EKP, Law BCM. Self-efficacy as a positive youth development construct: a conceptual review. *ScientificWorldJournal*. 2012;2012:452327. doi:10.1100/2012/452327
113. Fisher D, Frey N. Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework. IRAE. Published online October 18, 2013:1-8. doi:10.1598/e-ssentials.8037
114. Bandura A, Ross D, Ross SA. Vicarious reinforcement and imitative learning. *J Abnorm Psychol*. 1963;67:601-607. doi:10.1037/h0045550
115. Dweck CS, Yeager DS. Mindsets: a view from two eras. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. 2019;14(3). doi:10.1177/1745691618804166
116. Dweck CS. Carol Dweck Revisits the “Growth Mindset.” *Education Week*. Published September 22, 2015. Accessed March 24, 2026. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-carol-dweck-revisits-the-growth-mindset/2015/09>
117. Vijayaraghavan J, Vidyarthi A, Livesey A, et al. Strengthening adolescent agency for optimal health outcomes. *BMJ*. 2022;379:e069484. doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-069484
118. Cenkseven-Önder F, Çolakkadioğlu O. Decision-making and problem-solving as a well-being indicator among adolescents. *Educational Research and Reviews*. 2013;8(11):720-727. doi:https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR12.151
119. Luo S, Hu J, Zhang J, et al. The correlation between resilience and mental health of adolescents and young adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Front Psychiatry*. 2025;16. doi:10.3389/fpsy.2025.1536553
120. Sanders J, Munford R, Thimasarn-Anwar T, et al. The role of positive youth development practices in building resilience and enhancing wellbeing for at-risk youth. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 2015;42:40-53. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.02.006
121. Long KNG, Wilkinson R, Cowden RG, et al. Hope in adolescence and subsequent health and well-being in adulthood: an outcome-wide longitudinal study. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2024;347:116704. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116704
122. Assari S, Najand B, Najand I, et al. Behavioral and psychosocial correlates of hope among youth. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*. 2024;2:100088. doi:10.1016/j.gjmedi.2024.100088
123. Tremblay M, Baydala L, Khan M, et al. Primary substance use prevention programs for children and youth: a systematic review. *Pediatrics*. 2020;146(3):e20192747. doi:10.1542/peds.2019-2747
124. Scheier LM, Botvin GJ, Diaz T, et al. Social skills, competence, and drug refusal efficacy as predictors of adolescent alcohol use. *J Drug Educ*. 1999;29(3):251-278. doi:10.2190/M3CT-WWJM-5JJAQ-WP15
125. Spinrad TL, Eisenberg N. Prosocial Behavior and Empathy-Related Responding: Relations to Children’s Well-Being. In: Robinson MD, Eid M, eds. *The Happy Mind: Cognitive Contributions to Well-Being*. Springer International Publishing; 2017:331-347. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-58763-9_18
126. Li L, Khan A, Rameli MRM. Assessing the relationship between prosocial behavior and well-being: basic psychological need as the mediator. *Eur J Investig Health Psychol Educ*. 2023;13(10):2179-2191. doi:10.3390/ejihpe13100153
127. Li W, He QF, Lan JZ, et al. Empathy as a mediator of the relation between peer influence and prosocial behavior in adolescence: a meta-analysis. *J Youth Adolesc*. 2025;54(3):682-703. doi:10.1007/s10964-024-02079-3
128. González Moreno A, Molero Jurado M del M. Prosocial behaviours and emotional intelligence as factors associated with healthy lifestyles and violence in adolescents. *BMC Psychol*. 2024;12(1):88. doi:10.1186/s40359-024-01559-2
129. Walters GD. Prosocial peers as risk, protective, and promotive factors for the prevention of delinquency and drug use. *J Youth Adolescence*. 2020;49(3):618-630. doi:10.1007/s10964-019-01058-3
130. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *The Promise of Adolescence*. The National Academies Press; 2019. doi:https://doi.org/10.17226/25388
131. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *School Connectedness Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Published online 2009.
132. Durlak JA, Weissberg RP, Dymnicki AB, et al. The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*. 2011;82(1):405-432. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x
133. Office of the Surgeon General. *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*. Office of the U.S. Surgeon General; 2023.
134. Jordan JV. Relational-cultural theory: the power of connection to transform our lives. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*. 2017;56(3):228-243. doi:10.1002/johc.12055
135. Lavigne AL, Henrichs L, Acosta Feliz JA, et al. Cultural responsiveness and common conceptualizations of “good” teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse elementary classrooms in the U.S. and the Netherlands. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2022;118:103812. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2022.103812
136. Williams B. Accomplishing cross cultural competence in youth development programs. *The Journal of Extension*. 2001;39(6). <https://open.clemson.edu/joe/vol39/iss6/16>

REFERENCES

137. Roysircar G. Cultural self-awareness assessment: practice examples from psychology training. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. 2004;35(6):658–666. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.35.6.658
138. Axner M. Chapter 27. Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World | Section 2. Building Relationships with People from Different Cultures | Main Section | Community Tool Box. Ku.edu. Published 2019. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/building-relationships/main>
139. Tabern K. How to Start Conversations with Neurodiverse Kids. The Kids Mental Health Foundation. Published March 17, 2023. Accessed March 26, 2025. <https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/starting-conversations/how-to-start-conversations-with-neurodiverse-kids>
140. Reupert A. From individuals to populations: approaches to promoting mental health and preventing mental illness. *Advances in Mental Health*. 2022;20(3):181–183. doi:10.1080/18387357.2022.2143205
141. Donlan AE, Gunning AL, Wentzel KR. Supportive Relationships With and Among Adolescents as Fundamental Building Blocks of CCI Success. In: *Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Positive Youth Development*. Routledge; 2015.
142. Zaff JF, Jones EP, Donlan AE, Anderson S, eds. *Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Positive Youth Development*. Routledge; 2015. doi:10.4324/9781315650883
143. Bumbarger BK. From Collaboration, to Action, to Implementation, to Impact, to Scale: Putting All of the Pieces of a Comprehensive Community Initiative Together. In: *Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Positive Youth Development*. Routledge; 2015.
144. Beycioglu K, Kondakci Y. Organizational change in schools. *ECNU Review of Education*. 2021;4(4):788–807. doi:10.1177/2096531120932177
145. Kania J, Kramer M, Senge P. The Water of Systems Change. FSG. May 15, 2018. Accessed March 14, 2025. https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/
146. Ward PJ, Zabriskie RB. Positive youth development within a family leisure context: youth perspectives of family outcomes. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 2011;2011(130):29–42. doi:10.1002/yd.395
147. Delgado E, Serna C, Martínez I, et al. Parental attachment and peer relationships in adolescence: a systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2022;19(3):1064. doi:10.3390/ijerph19031064
148. Ratliff EL, Morris AS, Cui L, et al. Supportive parent-adolescent relationships as a foundation for adolescent emotion regulation and adjustment. *Front Psychol*. 2023;14. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1193449
149. Zhang Y, Qin P. Comprehensive review: understanding adolescent identity. *Studies in Psychological Science*. 2023;1(2):17–31. doi:10.56397/SPS.2023.09.02
150. Moretti MM, Peled M. Adolescent-parent attachment: bonds that support healthy development. *Paediatr Child Health*. 2004;9(8):551–555. doi:10.1093/pch/9.8.551
151. Soares AS, Pais-Ribeiro JL, Silva I. Developmental assets predictors of life satisfaction in adolescents. *Front Psychol*. 2019;10. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00236
152. Theokas C, Lerner RM. Observed ecological assets in families, schools, and neighborhoods: conceptualization, measurement, and relations with positive and negative developmental outcomes. *Applied Developmental Science*. 2006;10(2):61–74. doi:10.1207/s1532480xads1002_2
153. Atif H, Peck L, Connolly M, et al. The impact of role models, mentors, and heroes on academic and social outcomes in adolescents. *Cureus*. 14(7):e27349. doi:10.7759/cureus.27349
154. Roorda DL, Koomen HMY, Spilt JL, Oort FJ. The influence of affective teacher–student relationships on students’ school engagement and achievement: a meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research*. 2011;81(4):493–529. doi:10.3102/0034654311421793
155. Cornelius-White J. Learner-centered teacher–student relationships are effective: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*. 2007;77(1):113–143. doi:10.3102/003465430298563
156. Hamre BK, Pianta RC. Early Teacher-Child Relationships and the Trajectory of Children’s School Outcomes through Eighth Grade. *Child Development*. 2001;72(2):625–638. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00301
157. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About CDC Healthy Schools. July 11, 2023. Accessed September 11, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/about.htm>
158. Wang X, Yang L, Chen K, Zheng Y. Understanding teacher emotional exhaustion: exploring the role of teaching motivation, perceived autonomy, and teacher–student relationships. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2024;14(14). doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1342598
159. Turner S, Merchant K, Kania J, et al. Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 1 (SSIR). Ssir.org. Published 2025. Accessed October 6, 2025. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_1
160. Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People: Progress and Possibilities. National Academies Press; 2009. doi:10.17226/12480
161. Spoth R, Redmond C, Shin C, et al. Applying the PROSPER prevention delivery system with middle schools: Emerging adulthood effects on substance misuse and conduct problem behaviors through 14 years past baseline. *Child Development*. 2022;93(4):925–940. doi:10.1111/cdev.13746
162. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. A Guide to SAMHSA’s Strategic Prevention Framework. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; 2019.
163. Zeldin S, Christens BD, Powers JL. The psychology and practice of youth–adult partnership: bridging generations for youth development and community change. *Am J Community Psychol*. 2013;51(3–4):385–397. doi:10.1007/s10464-012-9558-y
164. Campbell D, Erbstein N. Engaging youth in community change: three key implementation principles. In: Walzer N, Cordes S, eds. *Innovative Community Change Practices*. Routledge; 2015.
165. Fine AD, Padilla KE, Tapp J. Can working collaboratively with police on community service promote positive youth development? *Police Practice and Research*. 2021;22(7):1739–1759. doi:10.1080/15614263.2021.1959331
166. Anderson SA, Sabatelli RM, Trachtenberg J. Community Police and Youth Programs as a Context for Positive Youth Development. *Police Quarterly*. 2007;10(1):23–40. doi:10.1177/109861106291372

REFERENCES

167. Marks M, Wood J. Generating Youth Safety from Below: Situating Young People at the Centre of Knowledge-Based Policing. In: *The Handbook of Knowledge-Based Policing*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd; 2008:263-278. doi:10.1002/9780470773215.ch12
168. Friedman W, Lurigio AJ, Greenleaf R, Albertson S. Encounters between police officers and youths: the social costs of disrespect. *Journal of Crime and Justice*. 2004;27(2):1-25. doi:10.1080/0735648X.2004.9721193
169. Swartz S, Cooper A, McLaughlin A. The role of trusted adults in young people's social and economic lives. *Youth & Society*. 2016;48(5):735-757. doi:10.1177/0044118X16637610
170. Developmental Services Group, Inc. Interactions between Youth and Law Enforcement Literature Review. OJJDP Model Programs Guide. Published online January 2018. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Interactions-Youth-Law-Enforcement.pdf>
171. Marsh SC, Dierkhising, Carly B. Toward a Conceptual Framework for Trauma-Informed Practice in Juvenile and Family Courts. *Juvenile and Family Justice Today*. Published online Summer 2013:19-20.
172. Cunningham KA, Gubner NR, Vick K, Herting JR, Walker SC. Redesigning juvenile probation to align with behavioral health and positive development principles: a quasi-experimental study. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 2023;50(1):6-21. doi:10.1177/00938548221082997
173. Aalsma MC, Schwartz K, Tu W. Improving police officer and justice personnel attitudes and de-escalation skills: a pilot study of Policing the Teen Brain. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*. 2018;57(7):415-430. doi:10.1080/10509674.2018.1523819
174. Broll R, Howells S. Community policing in schools: relationship-building and the responsibilities of school resource officers. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. 2021;15(2):701-715. doi:10.1093/polic/paz053
175. Brogan L, McPhee J, Gale-Bentz E, Rudd B, Goldstein N. Shifting probation culture and advancing juvenile probation reform through a community-based, participatory action research-informed training. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*. 2021;39(1):1. doi:10.1002/bsl.2497
176. Richards K, Cross C, Dwyer A. Police perceptions of young people: a qualitative analysis. *Police Practice and Research*. 2019;20(4):360-375. doi:10.1080/15614263.2018.1428899
177. International Association of Chiefs of Police. Police-Youth Engagement. 2018. <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/practices-in-modern-policing-police-youth-engagement>
178. CDCMMWR. QuickStats: Percentage of Children Aged 18 Years Who Received a Well-Child Checkup in the Past 12 Months, by Age Group and Year — National Health Interview Survey, United States, 2008 and 2018. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2020;69. doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm6908a5
179. National Children's Bureau. Children and Young People's Opinions and Experiences of Healthcare.; 2021. Accessed October 2, 2025. https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/NCB_Report%202021_Children%20and%20Young%20People%27s%20Opinions%20and%20Experiences%20of%20Healthcare.pdf
180. Hardin HK, Bender AE, Hermann CP, Speck BJ. An integrative review of adolescent trust in the healthcare provider relationship. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2020;77(4):1645-1655. doi:10.1111/jan.14674
181. Waselewski M, Amaro X, Huerto R, et al. Youth preferences for healthcare providers and healthcare interactions: a qualitative study. *BMC Primary Care*. 2024;25(1):63. doi:10.1186/s12875-024-02300-z
182. Gould D, Carson S. Life skills development through sport: current status and future directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. 2008;1(1):58-78. doi:10.1080/17509840701834573
183. Holt NL, Neely KC, Slater LG, et al. A grounded theory of positive youth development through sport based on results from a qualitative meta-study. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. 2017;10(1):1-49. doi:10.1080/1750984X.2016.1180704
184. Fraser-Thomas JL, Côté J, Deakin J. Youth sport programs: an avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*. 2005;10(1):19-40. doi:10.1080/1740898042000334890
185. Perry C. READ: Nothing Heals Like Sport – A Playbook for Coaches. CHJS. May 17, 2023. Accessed October 6, 2025. <https://chjs.org/resources/read-nothing-heals-like-sport-a-new-playbook-for-coaches/>
186. Godor BP. Cultivating resilience in youth: Assessing the psychological benefits of sport-based development programs. *Journal of Sport for Development*. 2025;13(1).
187. Varney R, Coakley L. Coaching life skills through sport. *The International Journal of Sport and Society; Champaign*. 2023; 14(2).
188. Petitpas AJ, Cornelius AE, Van Raalte JL, Jones T. A framework for planning youth sport programs that foster psychosocial development. *The Sport Psychologist*. 2005;19(1):63-80. doi:10.1123/tsp.19.1.63
189. *Calls for Coaches: Coaching Social and Emotional Skills in Youth Sports*. Aspen Institute. Published 2019. Accessed October 6, 2025. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED596319>
190. Luesse JE, Luesse HB. Sports-Based Youth Development Playbook: Best Practices and Future Opportunities. Online Submission. Published 2021. Accessed March 25, 2026. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED61820>
191. Geldhof GJ, Bowers EP, Mueller MK, et al. The Five Cs Model of Positive Youth Development. In: Bowers EP, Geldhof GJ, Johnson SK, et al., eds. *Promoting Positive Youth Development: Lessons from the 4-H Study*. Springer International Publishing; 2015:161-186. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-17166-1_9

CONTACT ADAPT

ADAPT supports the National High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program by providing training and technical assistance for substance use prevention to HIDTA communities. The mission of ADAPT is to support integration of the best available evidence for substance use prevention into communities by advancing mindsets, knowledge, and skills.



CONTACT US

Website: www.hidta.org/adapt

Email: adapt@wb.hidta.org