

Engage with Intention



A 12-week campaign to help
trusted adults build intentional,
health-promoting relationships (HPR)
with youth ages 11-18

Week 10

Topic:

**Weaving a Village of Trusted Adults
Around Every Youth**

- **Follow** ADAPT on [FACEBOOK](#) and [LINKEDIN](#).
- **SUBSCRIBE** to ADAPT on [YOUTUBE](#) and [EMAIL](#).
- **WEB:** www.hidta.org/adapt
- **EMAIL:** adapt@wb.hidta.org

WEEK 10

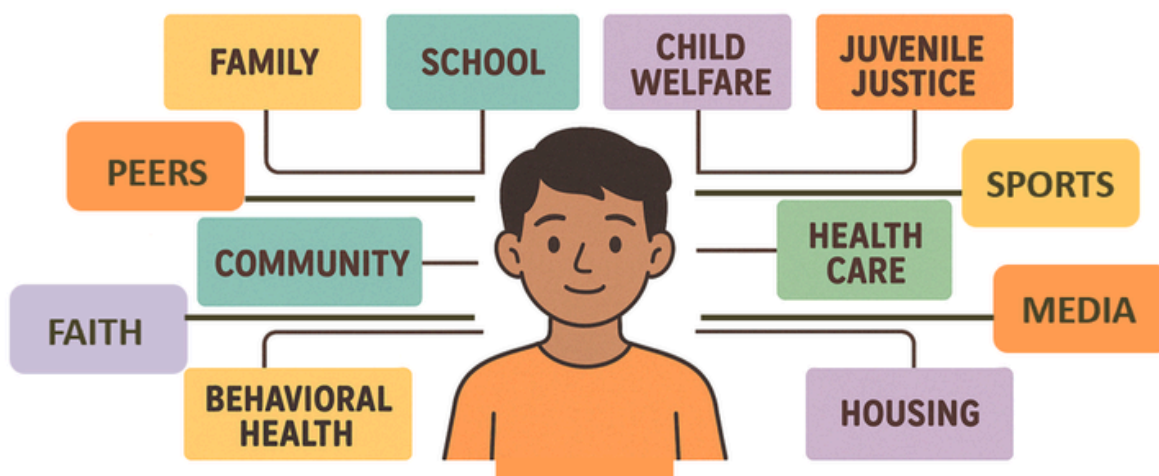
Weaving a Village of Trusted Adults Around Every Youth

- What kind of impact can a village of trusted adults have on a young person's life?
- What does it look like when multiple trusted adults show up for one young person across the course of a day?
- What can I do to promote building villages of trusted adults around the young people in my community?
- **TRUSTED ADULT ACTIVITY:** VILLAGE MAPPING & ACTIVATION
- **YOUTH ACTIVITY:** VILLAGE MAPPING & PARTICIPATION



WHAT KIND OF IMPACT CAN A VILLAGE OF TRUSTED ADULTS HAVE ON A YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE?

Every young person is surrounded by a village of adults – some obvious, others less visible – parents, teachers, coaches, bus drivers, school resource officers, youth program leaders, neighbors, healthcare providers, and more.



Decades of research show that both the number and quality of caring adult relationships powerfully shape young people's development. Young people who experience strong developmental relationships with multiple adults, including having at least two non-parent adults who genuinely cared about them, demonstrate greater resilience, self-efficacy, social-emotional skills, and better long-term mental and relational health outcomes, even when facing adversity.¹⁻³

Importantly, these benefits are not limited to one or two close relationships. Research shows a clear dose-response effect: the more strong, supportive adult relationships a young person experiences across home, school, community, and programs, the greater their well-being and thriving.^{4,5} Even brief, everyday interactions with a wider circle of adults can cumulatively reinforce core protective beliefs such as "I am seen and loved," "I matter," "I can influence my life," "I can overcome hard things," and "I have support."

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN MULTIPLE ADULTS SHOW UP FOR A YOUNG PERSON ACROSS THE COURSE OF A DAY?

A Day in the Life of Jordan's Trusted Adult Village



To illuminate the power of a village of trusted adults in the life of a young person, let's walk through an ordinary day with 15-year-old Jordan and meet some of the trusted adults who cross his path. As you read each moment, consider:

- How different roles are naturally positioned to cultivate certain beliefs and abilities
- How even short interactions can communicate mattering, support, and belief in a young person
- Where you might already be showing up in similar ways and where you could become more available
- How to adapt the *way of being* strategies for your own contexts or responses.

7:15 a.m. HOME | Parent/Guardian



Jordan came downstairs while his mom was rushing to leave for work, coffee in one hand and her bag in the other. She set her things down, greeted him with a warm smile, and said, "I have a few minutes. Can I make you some eggs?" She started cooking and asked how he was feeling about the day. When he mentioned a test he was nervous about, she looked at him and said, "I've seen how you've been taking breaks by putting your headphones on and taking a walk to manage the stress of that class. I admire that in you. Will you text me to let me know how it goes?"



HPR
Way of Being
Strategies
Used

Environment: Calm & attentive presence despite a busy morning
Connection: Caring, fully present, empathetic
Micro-Skills: Notice, affirm, be meaningfully curious, activate agency
Abilities Grown: Engage strategies to be well. Practice self-alignment.
Beliefs Strengthened: I am seen and loved. I can overcome hard things. I have support.

7:45 a.m. BUS | Bus Driver



As Jordan stepped onto the bus, the driver looked up, smiled, and said, "Morning, Jordan! Good to see you." He paused for a second, then added, "Hope you have a good one today." Jordan responded with a smile. It was quick, but the driver used his name and made eye contact like he cared. Even in those few seconds, Jordan felt noticed. The moment quietly reinforced that there are adults outside his family who see him and are rooting for him.



HPR
Way of Being
Strategies
Used

Environment: Warm, consistent presence on the bus
Connection: Caring, fully present, affirming
Micro-Skills: Notice, affirm
Abilities Grown: Connect with others and community.
Beliefs Strengthened: I matter. I have support.

🕒 10:30 a.m. SCHOOL | Teacher



During class, Jordan raised his hand and shared a thoughtful answer to a question. His teacher smiled, nodded, and said, "That's a really good point, Jordan. I appreciate you sharing your thinking." A few minutes later, as students were packing up, she added quietly, "Keep bringing ideas like that. It helps the whole class."

Jordan left the room standing a little taller. The moment gave him a quiet boost of confidence in his ability to contribute.

HPR
Way of Being
Strategies
Used

Environment: Supportive, encouraging classroom climate
Connection: Authentic, caring, affirming, honest, fully present
Micro-Skills: Notice, affirm, activate agency
Abilities Grown: Practice a growth mindset.
Beliefs Strengthened: I matter. I can influence my life.

🕒 2:15 p.m. SCHOOL | School Resource Officer



Jordan was walking down the hallway looking tense and distracted heading into his exam. Officer Johnson, who was standing near the main office, noticed and gently said, "Hey Jordan, you doing alright?" When Jordan gave a small shrug, the officer added in a calm, soft voice, "If you need a minute, you know where my office is. No pressure." He didn't push for more, just offered the option and kept moving so Jordan didn't feel singled out. Jordan appreciated that someone noticed without making a scene.

HPR
Way of Being
Strategies
Used

Environment: Calm, approachable, low-pressure presence
Connection: Caring, fully present, nonjudgmental
Micro-Skills: Notice, support youth in navigating challenges
Abilities Grown: Engage strategies to be well.
Beliefs Strengthened: I have support.

🕒 5:00 p.m. FIELD | Sports Coach



Practice had started, but Jordan was clearly distracted. He wasn't sure how he did on the test and needed a good score to pass the class. He kept missing easy passes and seemed to be going through the motions. After one drill, Coach pulled him aside and said, "You're not here today. What's going on?" Jordan hesitated, then said he was worried about how he did on an exam. Coach nodded and said, "Got it. Grades can definitely weigh heavy on our minds. Hmm. Your team is counting on you as well today, and I know you value giving them your best. I wonder if you could approach practice as a way to give your mind a break so you show up for the team the way you want to. Or maybe you need a minute to yourself? You have options and know yourself well. I trust your judgment on this." Jordan took a breath, said "Thanks, Coach." and then decided to run back on the field to join the team.

HPR
Way of Being
Strategies
Used

Environment: Team culture where players are seen as whole people
Connection: Caring, nonjudgmental
Micro-Skills: Notice, affirm, be meaningfully curious, support youth in navigating challenges, activate agency
Abilities: Practice self-alignment. Exercise agency. Care about others.
Beliefs Strengthened: I matter. I have support.

7:00 p.m. YARD – HOME | Neighbor



Jordan was walking home when his friend Daniel's mom, Mrs. Rivera, looked up from her porch. "Hey Jordan," she said with a warm smile. "Haven't seen you out in the yard much lately. Everything okay?" She walked down to the sidewalk, wiping her hands on her jeans. "Daniel was just asking when you could come over again. You should come by sometime – even if it's just to grab a snack and say hi." Jordan gave a small nod and kept walking, but the comment stuck with him. It felt good that someone had noticed he hadn't been around as much and wanted to spend some time with him.

HPR Way of Being Strategies Used

Environment: Warm, low-pressure neighborhood presence

Connection: Caring, nonjudgmental

Micro-Skills: Notice, affirm, be meaningfully curious

Abilities Grown: Connect with others and community.

Beliefs Strengthened: I matter. I have support.

7:10 p.m. HOME | Father



Jordan walked through the door later than usual. His dad was in the kitchen putting away dishes but didn't immediately ask about his day. Instead, he said, "Hey. Mom left you some leftovers in the fridge if you're hungry." He kept moving around the kitchen, giving Jordan space. After a few minutes he added, "You don't have to talk if you don't want to. But I'm here if you do. Mom mentioned you had an important test today that had a lot riding on it." Jordan sat at the counter and ate quietly. He didn't say much, but the fact that his dad wasn't pushing made it easier to just be there. Before Jordan went upstairs, his dad said, "I'm proud of you for getting through today. Whatever happened, we'll figure it out together." Jordan went to his room feeling more hopeful that things would be OK no matter what.

HPR Way of Being Strategies Used

Environment: Calm space, norm that family solves problems together without judgment

Connection: Caring, patient, fully present

Micro-Skills: Notice, affirm, support youth in navigating challenges

Abilities Grown: Engage strategies to be well.

Beliefs Strengthened: I am seen and loved. I can overcome hard things. I have support.



Themes from "A Day in the Life of Jordan's Trusted Adult Village"

Trusted adults made themselves **available** for Jordan and were **fully present, calm, and patient** in their interactions.

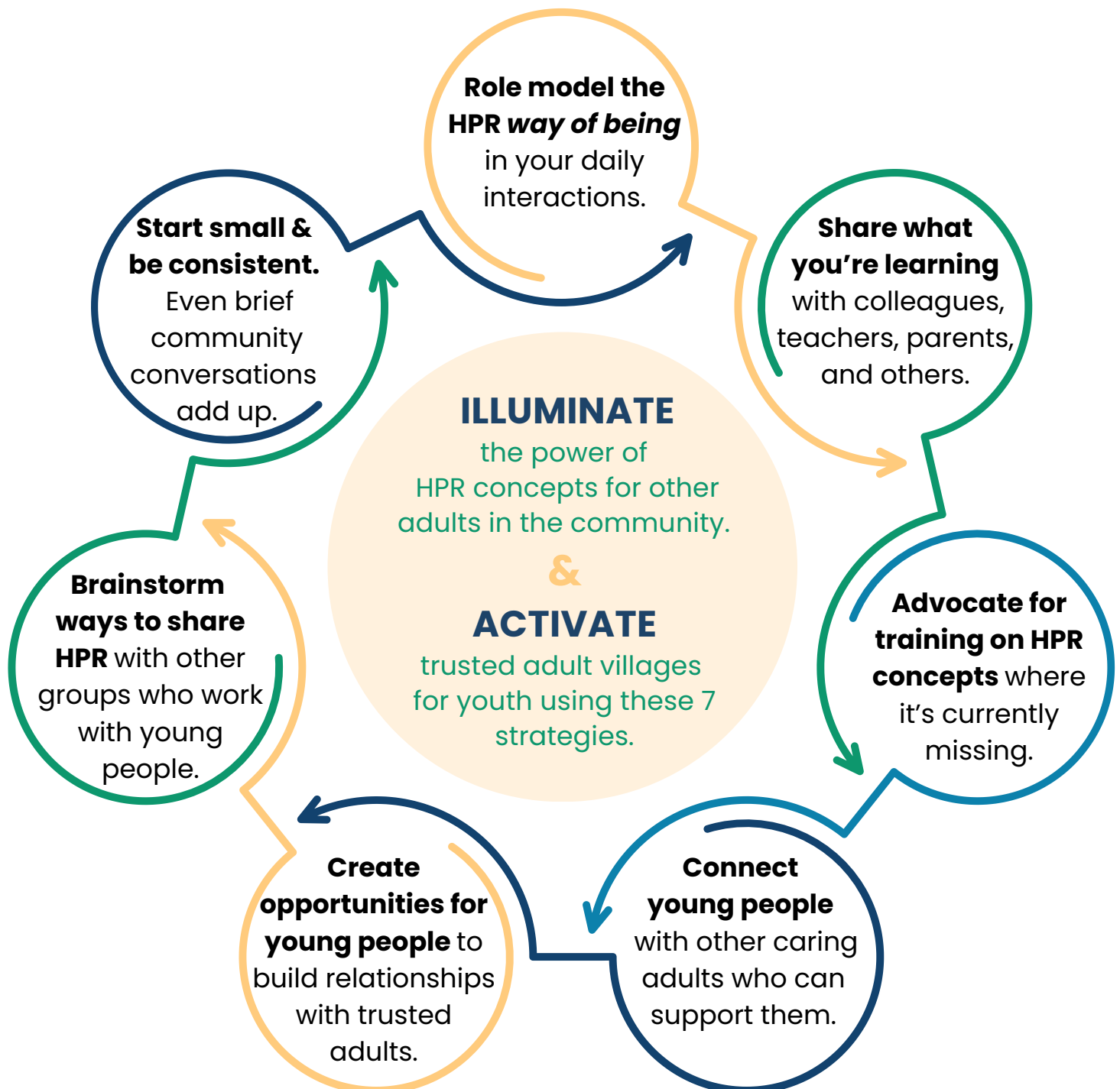
Trusted adults **noticed** Jordan's presence, strengths, words, and behaviors, including differences from his norm, and engaged **meaningful curiosity** to help Jordan recognize and **align with his values**.

Trusted adults demonstrated **care, respect, and nonjudgment** for Jordan, spoke the truth, and **activated his agency** in their forms of **support**.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE BUILDING VILLAGES OF TRUSTED ADULTS AROUND THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY?

The most effective way to weave and strengthen a village of trusted adults for individual youth is for the trusted adults in those villages to **become more intentional** about how they are engaging with the youth. Beyond what can be achieved in one-on-one moments, you can contribute to community activation of trusted adult villages for youth in a variety of different ways. Below are some practical ideas to get you started:

Community Activation Strategies



TRUSTED ADULT ACTIVITY:

VILLAGE MAPPING & ACTIVATION

Estimated Time: 20 mins

Purpose of Activity: To help you become more aware of the different youth villages you already serve in and identify ways you can promote development of trusted adult villages for other youth in the community.

1. **List the different individual youth villages you are currently part of.** (Examples: your own children, students in a class or program, players on a sports team, youth group, neighborhood kids, youth you mentor, etc.)
2. **For each village, reflect on the following questions:**
 - How many young people are in this group?
 - What is my primary role with them?
 - How many of these young people do I actually engage with, and how?
 - How consistently available am I to these young people?
 - What protective beliefs do I most naturally strengthen in these youth?
 - Where am I strong in how I show up?
 - Where could I be more intentional or available?
3. **After reviewing your villages, consider:**
 - Which village feels most connected right now?
 - Which one feels under-supported or under-prioritized by me?
 - Where do I have the greatest opportunity to make a bigger difference?
4. **Consider moments within these villages where you have observed adults using words and actions inconsistent with the HPR way of being?**
 - What was your initial reaction?
 - What thoughts and emotions came up for you?
 - What do you think was the resulting impact on the youth?
 - What could have been done differently to engage the HPR way of being more effectively?
 - What missed opportunities were observed in other trusted adults in that youth's village?
5. **Considering the 7 community activation strategies on the previous page, identify 3 specific actions you will take in the next 7 days to promote building villages of trusted adults around the young people in your community.**

YOUTH ACTIVITY:

VILLAGE MAPPING & PARTICIPATION



Estimated Time: 15 mins

Purpose: To help young people recognize the adults who already support them and strengthen their sense that they are seen, valued, and not alone.

REFLECTION: Who is part of my village of trusted adults?

Facilitator Instructions:

1. Ask the individual or group of youth to write down their responses to:

- “Who are the adults in your life who really see you, believe in you, or help you when things get hard?” Help them create a simple list of 4–6 adults. This can include family, teachers, coaches, neighbors, mentors, faith leaders, etc.
- “How do each of these people help or support you? Be specific.”
- “What beliefs do they seem to strengthen in you? (I am seen and loved. I matter. I can influence my life. I can overcome hard things. I have support.)”

2. (Optional but encouraged) Invite the young person to send a short thank-you text, note, or message to one of these adults this week.

ACTION: How can I strengthen my village of trusted adults?

Facilitator Instructions:

1. Share with youth: “Now that you’ve identified the village of trusted adults in your life and the many ways they support you, let’s think through a few ways **you** can also contribute to those relationships and strengthen them.”

2. Ask the youth to write down their response(s) to:

- “How can you express to them how much they and their support matter to you using **words** or **actions**?” (Highlight the short thank you note they considered sharing above as one example of both words and an action.)
- “Common ways youth **strengthen trust** with adults is by giving them their full attention, asking thoughtful questions, being honest, sharing feelings in a respectful way, showing interest in what they have to say, and accepting differences in opinion. What ways of strengthening trust with your village come to mind for you?”

3. Invite youth to share any meaningful thoughts related to the activity.

REFERENCES

1. Bethell C, Jones J, Gombojav N, Linkenbach J, Sege R. 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
2. Roehlkepartain EC, Pekel K, Syvertsen AK, Sethi J, Sullivan TK, Scales PC. *Relationships First: Creating Connections That Help Young People Thrive.* Search Institute; 2017.
3. Li J, Julian MM. Developmental relationships as the active ingredient: A unifying working hypothesis of “what works” across intervention settings. *Am J Orthopsychiatry.* 2012;82(2):157–166. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01151.x
4. Search Institute. *The Developmental Relationships Framework.* Search Institute; 2018.
5. Pekel K, Roehlkepartain EC, Syvertsen AK, Scales PC. *Don’t Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America’s Effort to Help All Children Succeed.* Search Institute; 2015.