

Engage with Intention

HPR in Action!

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

Week 2

Topics: How beliefs are formed and 5 core beliefs youth (and adults) need to be well

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WEEK 2

- How are beliefs formed?
- Why do beliefs matter so much for prevention of risks and promotion of flourishing in youth?
- What are 5 beliefs youth need to be well?
- **TRUSTED ADULT ACTIVITY:** HPR BELIEFS SELF-ASSESSMENT
- **YOUTH ACTIVITY:** HPR BELIEFS SELF-ASSESSMENT



HOW ARE BELIEFS FORMED?

If you knew that your everyday interactions with youth were quietly shaping the core beliefs that will guide them in life, would you show up differently? Beliefs are what we hold to be true. They are not usually formed through logic, facts, or formal teaching. Instead, they are shaped primarily through our repeated experiences and relationships, especially with the people we love and trust.

"For some of our most important beliefs we have no evidence at all, except that people we love and trust hold these beliefs."
- Daniel Kahneman

What happens in the brain? Every day youth receive all kinds of messages through their senses about who they are and what they're capable of (e.g. what they *hear, see, and feel* from others). Their brain tries to make sense of the messages by searching for meaning, which is informed by past experiences, emotions, and current beliefs. **New or infrequent messages have a difficult time becoming a new belief.**

A village of trusted adults

The more trusted adults that intentionally connect with youth using words and actions that build or reinforce positive, protective beliefs, **the stronger the positive beliefs become, and the harder it is for negative beliefs to take root or remain.** You don't have to be perfect, just purposeful and consistent. Every youth can benefit from a village of trusted adults in their lives shaping their positive beliefs.

Let's Practice!

Scenario: You talk with a discouraged youth after a tough day at school.



You say



Potential beliefs

"You'll be fine. Just toughen up."

- I'm alone.
- I'm not strong enough.



You say



Potential beliefs

"Today was hard, and you kept going even when it felt heavy. How can I help right now?"

- I can overcome hard things.
- I have support.

WHY DO BELIEFS MATTER SO MUCH FOR PREVENTION OF RISKS AND PROMOTION OF FLOURISHING IN YOUTH?

Our beliefs directly influence our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. In youth, limiting or negative beliefs often fuel painful emotions like depression, anxiety, shame, and hopelessness, which can lead to harmful behaviors such as substance use, violence, isolation, or giving up when things get difficult. On the other hand, strong positive beliefs foster hope, self-worth, belonging, and confidence, which can lead to healthier choices, stronger relationships, greater resilience, and a greater sense of purpose. In other words, **beliefs are one of the strongest predictors of whether a youth will struggle or thrive along with other personal, relational, and environmental factors.**

Sometimes it can be helpful to ask yourself the following in any moment you have with youth:



What belief am I cultivating in this youth in this moment?

- Am I building or reinforcing a protective belief?
- Am I doing nothing and missing an opportunity?
- Am I potentially building or reinforcing a negative or harmful belief?

WHAT ARE 5 BELIEFS YOUTH NEED TO BE WELL?



I am seen and loved.

I matter.

I can influence my life.

I can overcome hard things.

I have support.

These five core protective beliefs serve as part of the internal foundation youth need to prevent serious risks and truly thrive. When strong, beliefs such as “I am seen and loved” and “I matter” protect against depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and substance use, while “I can influence my life,” “I can overcome hard things,” and “I have support” reduce the likelihood of turning to violence or risky behaviors during stress or peer pressure. At the same time, these beliefs promote flourishing by building hope, self-worth, resilience, and purpose, leading youth to form strong relationships, stay engaged in school, pursue meaningful goals, and bounce back from setbacks. These beliefs yield healthier emotions and more constructive behaviors, which further strengthen the beliefs themselves.

TRUSTED ADULT ACTIVITY: HPR BELIEFS SELF-ASSESSMENT

I am seen
and loved.

I matter.

I can
influence
my life.

I can
overcome
hard
things.

I have
support.

Purpose of Activity: To give you, a trusted adult in the lives of youth, an opportunity to pause and honestly reflect on the current strength of your own five core beliefs. This exercise supports greater self-awareness and helps you better understand how your beliefs shape the way you show up with youth in your life.

Why is it important to assess your own beliefs first?

The science is clear: **We cannot effectively transmit beliefs we do not genuinely hold ourselves.** Just like you can't pour from an empty cup, your ability to help strengthen the five core beliefs in youth is deeply connected to your own conviction of them.

Youth learn beliefs primarily through observation and emulation of trusted adults. When you strongly believe "I matter" or "I can overcome hard things," your actions, tone of voice, body language, and emotional presence naturally communicate those beliefs, which youth pick up on far more powerfully in that way than from words alone. Adults with strong protective beliefs are better able to offer steady presence, consistent empathy, unconditional positive regard, a hopeful perspective, and maintain good boundaries – all of which help regulate a youth's nervous system and help protective beliefs take root.^{1,2}

HPR Truth: The stronger your own five core beliefs are, the more naturally and consistently you can model, affirm, and co-create them with youth. This doesn't mean you need to be at a 10/10 in every belief. It means that awareness + intentional growth in your own beliefs directly increases your effectiveness as a trusted adult.

Taking time to reflect on your beliefs helps you identify areas for growth, **model the very process of self-reflection and growth** you hope to encourage in youth, and prepare you to seize opportunities to promote these core beliefs in youth and others.

1. Complete the HPR Beliefs Self-Assessment.

2. Reflect on the following questions:

- How might my own beliefs affect the way I show up for the youth in my life?
- Are there any insights that come up for me that could inform some next steps to help me strengthen certain beliefs (e.g. healing, forgiveness, self-compassion)?
- How might strengthening these core positive beliefs make me more effective at strengthening the same beliefs in others?

1. Bandura A. 1977. Social Learning Theory. Prentice Hall.

2. Rogers CR. The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. Journal of Consulting Psychology. 1957;21(2):95-103. doi:10.1037/h0045357

YOUTH ACTIVITY: HPR BELIEFS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Estimated Time: 15-20 mins



Purpose of Activity: To help youth reflect on the strength of their five core protective beliefs across different areas of life (home, school, peers, and overall). This builds self-awareness and opens the door for meaningful conversations with trusted adults.

1. Begin by introducing the activity to youth:

“Today we’re going to look at five important core beliefs that help us feel good about ourselves and give us the confidence and strength to pursue life goals and manage challenges. We’re going to rate **how strong** each belief feels for us right now in different parts of our lives – at home, at school, with friends or peers, and overall.”

2. Introduce and explain the 5 beliefs in a simple way.

- **I am seen and loved** – People really see me and care about me.
- **I matter** – I am important, valued, and contribute to this world.
- **I can influence my life** – I have control over what happens in my life.
- **I can overcome hard things** – I can get through tough situations.
- **I have support** – I have people who look out for me and help me.

3. Print copies of the **HPR Beliefs Self-Assessment** on the next page, and ask youth to complete.

4. Invite youth to share their responses to the following questions if you and they feel comfortable.

- Which belief feels the strongest right now?
- What or who do you think has built that belief in you?
- Which belief(s) do you want to be stronger?
- For any beliefs you rated between a 3 and 6, why did you not rate them lower?
- In what ways can I help to strengthen the beliefs you need most right now?
- What do you think you can do help build a belief you need to be strengthened?

Facilitation Tips:

- 1) Reassure youth there are no right or wrong answers.
- 2) Emphasize this is about honest self-reflection.
- 3) Listen more than you speak and validate what they share.

HPR BELIEFS SELF-ASSESSMENT



Rate **HOW STRONG** each of the beliefs feels for you right now in different parts of your life according to the scale below.



Core Belief	At Home	At School/Work	With Peers	OVERALL
I am seen and loved.				
I matter.				
I can influence my life.				
I can overcome hard things.				
I have support.				

**SMALL
DAILY
PRACTICE**

This week start to notice more intentionally when others make you feel like you matter. Think about what they said or did to make you feel that way and share it with them. Be as specific as possible with the details. This will help them to believe they matter, too!