

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 8

Topic:

Grow youth abilities.

(HPR *way of being* strategy #4)

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

WEEK 8: Grow youth abilities.

- How do youth abilities influence youth beliefs?
- What specific youth abilities strengthen the five HPR core protective beliefs?
- How can trusted adults engage the HPR *way of being* (environment, connection, & micro-skills) to grow youth abilities?
- **TRUSTED ADULT ACTIVITY:** GROWING MY OWN ABILITIES
- **YOUTH ACTIVITY:** MY STRENGTHS & GROWTH PLAN

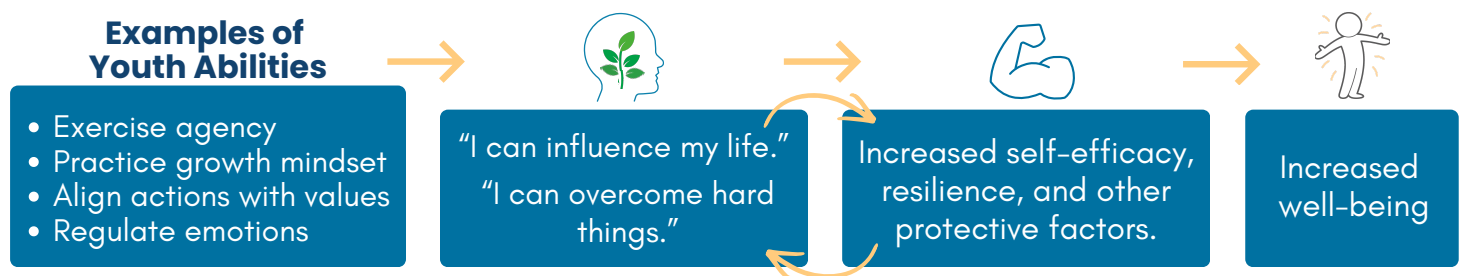


HOW DO YOUTH ABILITIES INFLUENCE YOUTH BELIEFS?

An ability is a learned and developed capacity or competence that enables a person to do something well or effectively. In the context of youth development, abilities enable youth to respond positively and resourcefully to the expectations and challenges of everyday life. They strengthen as they are applied by youth across a variety of meaningful contexts. Trusted adults with an HPR mindset are available, able, motivated, and willing to support youth in growing their abilities.

Abilities directly influence beliefs young people hold about themselves and their world. The way it works is through experience and mindset: when youth are given opportunities to repeatedly practice abilities in environments where both missteps and successes are considered learning opportunities, they can grow and strengthen the evidence supporting their protective beliefs. Over time, these experiences shape cognitive and emotional patterns, making the beliefs more stable and accessible.

For example, the repeated experience of achieving a desired outcome through one's own growth mindset, decisions, actions, and emotional regulation builds the beliefs "I can influence my life." and "I can overcome hard things." Research in positive youth development and self-determination theory supports that growing these abilities builds self-efficacy, resilience, positive self-beliefs, and better life outcomes, including overall well-being.¹⁻³



1. Ryan RM, Deci EL. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *Am Psychol.* 2000;55(1):68-78.
2. Lerner RM, Lerner JV, Murry VM, et al. Positive youth development in 2020: Theory, research, programs, and the promotion of social justice. *J Res Adolesc.* 2021;31(4):1115-1134.
3. Benson PL, Scales PC, Hamilton SF, Sesma A. Positive youth development: Theory, research, and applications. In: Damon W, Lerner RM, eds. *Handbook of Child Psychology.* Vol 1. 6th ed. Wiley; 2006:894-941.

WHAT SPECIFIC YOUTH ABILITIES STRENGTHEN THE HPR CORE PROTECTIVE BELIEFS?

Growing youth abilities is the fourth and ongoing strategy in the HPR *way of being*. While the first three strategies (creating the environment, facilitating connection, and engaging micro-skills) are primarily implemented by trusted adults, growing abilities is a strategy youth can carry forward themselves and continue to engage in throughout their lives to actively strengthen and maintain the five core protective beliefs. This is why it is so important for trusted adults to **seize and provide as many meaningful opportunities as possible** for youth to practice and apply these abilities in real life.

Trusted adults implementing the HPR *way of being* focus on **growth of seven key youth abilities** to strengthen the five core protective beliefs:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | Practice self-alignment. | Supports youth to behave in ways that align with their values, goals, & priorities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am seen & loved.• I matter. |
| 2 | Practice a growth mindset. | Encourages youth to view challenges or setbacks as opportunities to grow. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can influence my life.• I can overcome hard things. |
| 3 | Exercise agency. | Helps youth build capacity to make their own choices and take purposeful action. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can influence my life. |
| 4 | Make healthy & wise choices. | Supports youth in positive decision-making and discernment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can influence my life.• I can overcome hard things. |
| 5 | Engage strategies to be well. | Helps youth use tools to manage emotions and stress and be well. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can influence my life.• I can overcome hard things.• I have support. |
| 6 | Care about others. | Helps youth build empathy, humility, and service towards those around them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am seen and loved.• I matter.• I have support. |
| 7 | Connect with others & community. | Fosters in youth a sense of belonging, communication capabilities, and meaningful relationship development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am seen & loved.• I matter.• I have support. |

HOW CAN TRUSTED ADULTS ENGAGE THE ENVIRONMENT, CONNECTION, & MICRO-SKILLS TO GROW YOUTH ABILITIES?

Remember – the HPR way of thinking guides the HPR way of being. Trusted adults intentionally use the first three strategies of the HPR way of being to create the conditions and opportunities for youth to be able to grow their abilities in everyday moments with trusted adult support and affirmation.



In this moment, what abilities can I help them grow?

- How can I **create a positive and safe emotional environment and opportunities** for youth to practice their abilities?
- How can I **facilitate meaningful connection** using my words and actions?
- How can I **engage my words and actions** to affirm and support youth in growing their abilities?

EXAMPLE 1

Exercise Agency & Make Wise Decision

A 14 y.o. is deciding whether to try out for a sports team with a huge commitment.

Environment: Create a calm, distraction-free space. Promote youth's voice and choice in the decision.

Connection: Offer full presence and empathy. Maintain warm eye contact.

Micro-skills: Offer support, be meaningful curious, and activate agency.
–“What kind of support would be most helpful from me?”
–“I can see you want to make a thoughtful decision. I'm here with you and trust your ability to weigh what's right for you.”
–“What matters most to you about this decision?”
–“What are the pros and cons from your perspective?”

EXAMPLE 2

Practice Growth Mindset & Strategies to Be Well

A 15-year old is feeling overwhelmed and discouraged after doing poorly on an important test.

Environment: Create an emotionally safe space with calm presence.

Connection: Offer empathy, authenticity, care and nonjudgment.

Micro-skills: Reflect, activate agency, & support emotional regulation.
–“That test result really stung, and it makes sense you're discouraged. It sounds like you're feeling disappointed and worried about what this means for your grade.”
–“What small step feels manageable right now? Reviewing the test together, making a new study plan, or just taking a break first?”

EXAMPLE 3

Practice Self-Alignment & Make a Wise Decision

A 16-year old gets caught vaping at school and doesn't want to miss upcoming games with his soccer team.

Environment: Create a safe and confidential space. Promote openness and a matter-of-fact approach.

Connection: Offer authenticity, empathy, and non-judgment.

Micro-skills: Be fully present, curious, affirm, and reflect.
–“What do you like about vaping? What are the downsides of vaping?”
–“What would it mean to you to not be able to play?”
–“It is important to you to be out there with your team.”
–“Knowing how important this is, what are your next steps?”

TRUSTED ADULT ACTIVITY:

GROWING MY OWN ABILITIES

Estimated
Time:
15 mins

Purpose: To help you reflect on the strength of their own abilities and consider what personal work or growth might help you better support the young people in your life in developing those same abilities.

Instructions: Review the brief descriptions of the HPR abilities in this week's content and answer the questions below. Be honest and compassionate with yourself. The goal is increased self-awareness and intentional growth as a trusted adult.

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

1. Which of these abilities am I strongest in?

What evidence from my life supports my response?

2. Which abilities do I find more challenging or know I am still growing in myself?

What evidence from my life supports my response?

What gets in the way or makes them difficult for me?

How are these abilities connected to the presence of the core beliefs (I am seen and loved. I matter. I can influence my life. I can overcome hard things. I have support.) in myself?

3. How do my own strengths and challenges in these abilities affect my ability to grow them in youth?

4. Among the abilities I find more challenging, what small steps of growth could I focus on this week?

YOUTH ACTIVITY:

MY STRENGTHS & GROWTH PLAN



Estimated Time: 30 mins

Purpose of Activity: To help you (youth) notice your own strengths in different abilities that support a protective belief system, reflect on the abilities you want to grow, and create a simple plan to practice them in your everyday life.

Instructions for Youth:

Step 1. Reflect on the importance of the following seven HPR abilities in your life:

- **Practice self-alignment:** I accept who I am today, know the kind of person I want to be, and live in a way that matches my values and what's important.
- **Practice a growth mindset:** I believe I can improve with every effort and see challenges as an opportunity to learn.
- **Exercise agency:** I make my own choices and take action to influence what happens in my life.
- **Make healthy & wise choices:** I thoughtfully make decisions that are good and wise for my body, mind, and future and incorporate supportive influences on those decisions such as perspectives of trusted adults or my faith.
- **Engage strategies to be well:** I use tools like deep breathing, exercise, talking to someone, or taking a break when things get hard or to keep myself well.
- **Care about others:** I show kindness, empathy, and concern for the people around me and seek to understand their needs and perspectives.
- **Connect with others and community:** I build and maintain meaningful relationships and serve my community.

Step 2. Answer the following questions on a sheet of paper or in a journal:

- Which abilities am I strong at? How do I know?
- Which abilities are more challenging for me?
- What abilities would I like to grow that may not be listed here?

Step 3. Develop a growth plan.

- Which 1-2 abilities would I like to get stronger in this week?
- What is one small way I can practice these abilities this week?
- Who can support me or who can I talk to about it?
- How will I know I am making progress?

Step 4. Discuss your responses as an individual or group (to the degree you feel comfortable sharing) with a trusted adult facilitator.