

Introduction to Developmental Relationships



DEVELOPMENTAL
RELATIONSHIPS

What happens in relationships that makes them so important to young people's growth and learning?

Search Institute research has identified five key elements of a relationship that, like the roots of a tree, are the source of nourishment, stability, and resilience for young people. Ongoing Search Institute studies show that when young people experience relationships characterized by the five elements of Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework, their social-emotional skills are stronger, their academic outcomes are better, and their risk behaviors are lower.

In this workshop, participants will:

- Recognize the role that developmental relationships have played in their own lives and make a personal connection and commitment to building developmental relationships
- Understand the elements of developmental relationships that have emerged through Search Institute's ongoing applied research
- Identify and develop opportunities to build upon their relational strengths and to address their areas for growth



DR In Your Development Tool

For each section below, write the names of up to three people who did these things for and with you.

Who showed you that you mattered to them?

They may have done this by . . .

- Being someone you could trust. 1. _____
- Really paying attention when you were together. 2. _____
- Making you feel known and valued. 3. _____
- Showing you that they enjoyed being with you.
- Praising you for your efforts and achievements.

Who pushed you to keep getting better?

They may have done this by . . .

- Expecting you to live up to your potential. 1. _____
- Pushing you to go further. 2. _____
- Helping you learn from mistakes and setbacks. 3. _____
- Insisting that you take responsibility for your actions.

Who helped you complete tasks and achieve your goals?

They may have done this by . . .

- Guiding you through hard situations and systems. 1. _____
- Building your confidence to take charge of your life. 2. _____
- Standing up for you when you needed it. 3. _____
- Putting in place limits that kept you on track.

Who treated you with respect and gave you a say?

They may have done this by . . .

- Taking you seriously and treating you fairly. 1. _____
- Involving you in decisions that affected you. 2. _____
- Working with you to solve problems and reach goals. 3. _____
- Creating opportunities for you to take action and lead.

Who connected you with people and places that broadened your world?

They may have done this by . . .

- Exposing you to new ideas, experiences, and places. 1. _____
- Inspiring you to see possibilities for your future. 2. _____
- Introducing you to other people who helped you grow. 3. _____

Questions to share with your group:

Which person(s) did you list the most?

Which person is a surprise in thinking of their influence on you?

Developmental Relationships are:

Close connections through which young people

_____, gain abilities to _____,
and learn how to interact with and _____ around
them.

3 outcomes:

My Notes



DEVELOPMENTAL
RELATIONSHIPS



DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Framework

Developmental relationships are the roots of thriving and resilience for young people, regardless of their background or circumstances. Through these relationships, young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Just as trees rely on a system of roots to support and nourish them, young people need to experience developmental relationships in their families, schools, programs, and communities. However, too many young people miss these opportunities due to bias, prejudice, and systemic exclusion based on their race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, or other differences. Ensuring that every young person experiences the developmental relationships they need is a vital challenge for the 21st century.

The Developmental Relationships Framework was developed by Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN. 800-888-7828; www.searchinstitute.org.

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EXPRESS CARE

Show me that I matter to you.

Be dependable
Be someone I can trust

Be warm
Show me you enjoy being with me

Listen
Really pay attention when we are together

Encourage
Praise me for my efforts and achievements

Believe in me
Make me feel known and valued



CHALLENGE GROWTH

Push me to keep getting better.

Expect my best
Expect me to live up to my potential

Hold me accountable
Insist I take responsibility for my actions

Stretch
Push me to go further

Reflect on failures
Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks



PROVIDE SUPPORT

Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

Navigate
Guide me through hard situations and systems

Advocate
Stand up for me when I need it

Empower
Build my confidence to take charge of my life

Set boundaries
Put limits in place that keep me on track



SHARE POWER

Treat me with respect and give me a say.

Respect me
Take me seriously and treat me fairly

Collaborate
Work with me to solve problems and reach goals

Include me
Involve me in decisions that affect me

Let me lead
Create opportunities for me to take action and lead



EXPAND POSSIBILITIES

Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.

Inspire
Inspire me to see possibilities for my future

Connect
Introduce me to people who can help me grow

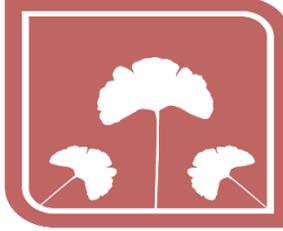
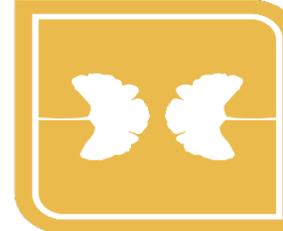
Broaden horizons
Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places

If you would like to know more about measuring Developmental Relationships research data, see "The Intersection of Developmental Relationships, Equitable Environments, and SEL" on the Search Institute website here: <https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Insights-Evidence-DRs-DEI-SEL-FINAL.pdf>

What you're doing...

IN PERSON

VIRTUALLY

Express Care			
Challenge Growth			
Provide Support			
Share Power			
Expand Possibilities			

Developmental Relationships in the Words of Youth

“I feel like he’s more like family, cause when I have issues in school or at home he gives me advice. I can trust him with what I say.” - *Youth in after school program* (**EXPRESS CARE**)

“The teachers that motivate me to do my best let me know it’s okay to make mistakes.” - *Public school student* (**CHALLENGE GROWTH**)

“They help you feel more comfortable doing the things that are expected.” - *Youth in an education/employment program* (**PROVIDE SUPPORT**)

“At first [the staff] were there to get us going and show us how to do stuff, but then, they stepped back and let us take over.” - *Youth participant in a leadership camp* (**SHARE POWER**)

“[The staff] helped me discover new things that I used to not like, such as school work and afterschool programs.” - *Youth in an after school program* (**EXPAND POSSIBILITIES**)

“Trust comes from when [teachers] put you on the same level, instead of ‘I’m the teacher and you’re the student.’” - *Public school student* (**SHARE POWER**)

“Having an adult say to you, ‘I think you’re capable and I’m not going to do this for you because I know you can do this’ is a huge thing that I don’t think a lot of teenagers get.” - *High school participant in a peer program* (**CHALLENGE GROWTH**)

“[The staff] frequently know people in different fields and working in different places, so I’ve gotten lots of contacts through them.” - *Youth participant in a conservation program* (**EXPAND POSSIBILITIES**)

“...if you’re sitting there, [the staff] will tell you stories about their life or things they’ve been through. It’s just, all the time, they care about you and they want you to be comfortable with talking to them.” - *Youth in a Leadership Camp* (**EXPRESS CARE**)

“My teacher said, ‘I realize you have a bad grade. I just want you to know I’m here to help you’...I appreciated they saw what I was going through as a person, not just a student.” - *Public school student* (**PROVIDE SUPPORT**)

Becoming More Intentional

Intentionality Tool

How much attention do you give to the actions listed below in your work with young people? Please answer as honestly and accurately as possible.

Almost No Attention	A Little Attention	A Fair Amount of Attention	A Lot of Attention	Almost Constant Attention
(1 pt.)	(2 pts.)	(3 pts.)	(4 pts.)	(5 pts.)



**Express
Care**

- Showing them that they can trust me.
- Giving them individual attention.
- Making them feel known and valued.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Element Total (add points):



**Challenge
Growth**

- Setting high expectations for them.
- Helping them learn from mistakes & failure.
- Holding them accountable for their actions.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Element Total (add points):

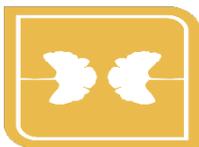


**Provide
Support**

- Guiding them through hard situations.
- Building their self-confidence.
- Standing up for them when they need it.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Element Total (add points):



**Share
Power**

- Taking their ideas & opinions seriously.
- Involving them in important decisions.
- Letting them take the lead.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Element Total (add points):



**Expand
Possibilities**

- Inspiring them to see future possibilities.
- Exposing them to new ideas.
- Introducing them to new people.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Element Total (add points):

Element Total (add points):

Informed by the numbers above and other things I have been thinking about, the element of a developmental relationship that I want to be more intentional about is: _____

Making Commitments



DEVELOPMENTAL
RELATIONSHIPS

My first next step to being more intentional in building
Developmental Relationships is to...

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE:

I am going to:

(do what?)

to build stronger developmental relationships with _____

(which young people?)

In the next month.

Notes:



DEVELOPMENTAL
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This is Just the Beginning...

Search Institute is here to support you on your Developmental Relationships journey

The Search Institute, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has launched a first-ever Developmental Relationships Resource Hub providing *free access* to a set of high-quality resources for building young people's developmental relationships.

The collection of activities, self-assessments, videos, measurements and other tools consists of more than 50 resources created by the Search Institute based on research-to-practice partnerships with youth-serving organizations, as well as key resources from peer organizations. [Browse the Resource Hub today!](#)



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insights&practice

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We offer several learning experiences that will inspire and equip you and your organization to help young people thrive. To stay up-to-date on new and upcoming workshop opportunities subscribe [here](#).

Search Institute

Who We Are?

Search Institute is a non-profit organization that partners with schools, youth programs, community coalitions, and other organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity.

What Do We Do?

Drawing on extensive research, Search Institute works worldwide to bring research-based solutions to the most pressing challenges in the lives of young people. Everything we do focuses on the strengths of young people—rather than deficits—so they can build on what they’re already doing right. Through valuable frameworks, such as developmental relationships and Developmental Assets®, we give youth leaders the tools to help young people successfully navigate their teen and pre-teen years to become thriving adults.

How Do We Work?

Search Institute equips those who work with youth to help young people achieve constructive goals, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. We do this through...

- High-quality research, evaluation, and capacity-building projects that deepen knowledge of the social and emotional needs of young people and their families.
- Tools, resources, and services to equip educators, youth workers, communities, and other leaders to create a world where young people can be and become their best selves.
- Partnership with schools, foundations, corporations, communities, and other youth-serving systems to deepen capacity and impact in helping youth and families succeed.

Where Do We Focus Our Work?

Search Institute links its research, tools, services, and partnerships in the following areas:

Schools— Your school plays a critical role in building not only students’ academic skills, but also the social and emotional skills that are essential for lifelong success. Thousands of schools utilize Search Institute’s research, tools, and services that give all students the opportunity to succeed.

Youth Programs— Time spent with caring adults outside of the home and classroom can have a profound impact on how youth see themselves and the world around them. Search Institute’s research-based tools and resources translate the passion and commitment of your youth development staff into effective developmental relationships that help young people thrive.

Communities— A “village” of support and opportunity is sometimes needed to ensure the success of all youth in a community. Our resources will assist your coalition in developing and implementing action plans with aligned expectations and measurable goals.

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