

KNOW! FIVE WAYS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH



Express Care

Expressing care means letting the young people in your life know that they truly matter to you. It's about spending quality time together, really listening when they talk, and showing up for them in ways that count. When you are with them, give them your full attention and let them know how much you enjoy spending time with them. Your consistent presence goes a long way in showing that you care.

TALKING TIP

Ask open-ended questions that invite your young person to share about themselves. Try asking, "What's one thing that made you smile today?" and following up with a validating response like, "That sounds really special. I love hearing about what makes you happy."

Challenge Growth

As adults, we know how important it is to challenge ourselves and grow from our mistakes. The same goes for young people. You can help them grow by believing in them and holding them to high, but fair expectations. Expect the best from them and hold them accountable for their actions. Let them know that you see the best in them and that you're confident in their ability to rise to challenges. When things don't go as planned, help them see the big picture – mistakes are opportunities to learn, grow, and do better next time.

TALKING TIP

You might say, "I see so many strengths in you, and I know you are capable of doing great things. Let's talk about what you learned from this experience and how you might approach it next time."

Healthy, positive relationships with caring adults help young people thrive. When young people experience strong developmental relationships, they build resilience, confidence, and a clearer sense of who they are and how they want to contribute to the world around them. And it's not just the young people who benefit! Meaningful connections with youth also help adults grow as parents, teachers, caregivers, and as people.

Based on the [Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework](#), here are five ways you can strengthen your connections and build healthier, more supportive relationships with the young people in your life.

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Provide Support

As young people grow, they are facing many challenges for the first time. Providing support means being there to guide and encourage young people without taking over. It's about empowering them to make their own decisions and offering advice and guidance when needed. Support can also mean setting clear, caring boundaries for young people that help to keep them on the right track.

When a young person faces a challenge, ask "What do you think your options are?" Then listen as they walk through their thinking and share your perspective to help them find their way forward.

TALKING TIP

Share Power

Strong, respectful relationships go both ways. Young people have unique thoughts, opinions, and perspectives that deserve to be heard. Building a healthy relationship means collaborating and showing that you trust them.

Look for ways to let young people take the lead. You might say, "I know you're really passionate about [topic]. Can you show me how you do it?"

TALKING TIP

Expand Possibilities

Young people have their whole lives ahead of them, which can be both exciting and intimidating. Help them to explore what's out there by introducing them to new people, places, and experiences that spark their curiosity and broaden their horizons. When they start to imagine what's possible, young people can find a sense of hope and purpose for their future.

Get curious together! Pick one new experience or interest to explore each month. Maybe it's attending a community event, trying a new hobby, or connecting with a local expert. Your enthusiasm and resources can help open doors that young people never knew existed.

TALKING TIP

RESOURCES

- [Relationships Check | Search Institute](#)
- [Building Supportive Relationships with Young People | Young Minds](#)
- [Building a Healthy Relationship with your Young Person | Headspace](#)

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