

The Developmental Relationships Framework

This framework of developmental relationships identifies five strategies supported by a total of

20 actions that contribute to young people thriving. In a relationship, each person influences the other. Percentages are parents of 3 to 13 year olds who report strength in the measures of each action.

Express CARE: Show that you like me and want the best for me. 83%

- **Listen**—Pay attention when you are with me. 82%
- **Be Warm**—Let me know that you like being with me and express positive feelings toward me. 80%
- **Invest**—Commit time and energy to doing things for and with me. 82%
- **Show Interest**—Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about. 86%
- **Be Dependable**—Be someone I can count on and trust. 89%

CHALLENGE Growth: Insist that I try to continuously improve. 72%

- **Inspire**—Help me see future possibilities for myself. 57%
- **Expect**—Make it clear that you want me to live up to my potential. 84%
- **Stretch**—Recognize my thoughts and abilities while also pushing me to go a bit further. 62%
- **Limit**—Hold me accountable for appropriate boundaries and rules. 82%

Provide SUPPORT: Help me complete tasks and achieve goals. 75%

- **Encourage**—Praise my efforts and achievements. 91%
- **Guide**—Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn. 61%
- **Model**—Be an example I can learn from and admire. 76%
- **Advocate**—Stand up for me when I need it. 77%

Share POWER: Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions. 41%

- **Respect**—Take me seriously and treat me fairly. 61%
- **Negotiate**—Give me a voice in making decisions that affect me. 35%
- **Respond**—Understand and adjust to my needs, interests, and abilities. 46%
- **Collaborate**—Work with me to accomplish goals and solve problems. 56%

Expand POSSIBILITIES: Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.

36%

- **Explore**—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. 35%
- **Connect**—Introduce me to people who can help me grow. 29%
- **Navigate**—Help me work through barriers that could stop me from achieving my goals. 63%

Why Developmental Relationships Matter: Early Evidence

WELL-BEING: Several pilot studies show strong* associations between developmental relationships and different measures of young people’s well-being and thriving.

Child Relationships with Parents (Parents’ Perspectives)	Youth Relationships with Parents (Youth and Parent Perspectives)	Youth Relationships with Teachers (Student Perspectives)
Parents who report stronger developmental relationships with their children are much more likely to say that their child is . . .	When parents and youth both report stronger relationships in their families, youth are more likely to report that they . . .	When students report stronger developmental relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motivated to learn• Manages emotions well• Has fewer conduct problems• Puts in effort to hard tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage emotions well• Interact well with people who are different from them• Help other people• Have a strong sense of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be motivated to master learning• Manage emotions well• Be goal oriented• Persevere in the face of challenges or obstacles
SOURCE: An online survey of 1,054 parents with children ages 3-13 across the United States.	SOURCE: A pilot survey of youth (ages 12 to 18) and their parents (633 families) in two communities in the Midwest and South U.S.	SOURCE: A pilot survey of 610 students, grade 6- 12, in one community in the Northwest U.S.

* The shown correlations are above .40, which are considered strong in the social sciences. Correlations do not indicate causality.

THRIVING: Relationships—much more than demographics—predict thriving.

Developmental relationships in families contribute 43% of the difference in children showing signs of thriving, which include being responsible and caring, having a sense of purpose, setting goals, and being more engaged in learning. Demographics (e.g., income, race/ ethnicity, family composition.) contribute just 5% of the difference.

SOURCE: A Search Institute study of 1,054 parents of children ages 3-13.

RESILIENCE: Youth in families experiencing a lot of stress and challenges do much better when they have strong relationships with their parents.

Many families experience high levels of stress or trauma, such as the death of a family member, violence, and unemployment. When their families face these stresses, youth are much more likely to be doing well, despite the challenges, if they have strong developmental relationships with their parents. For example, they are **15 times more likely to take personal responsibility and 11 times more likely to have a sense of hopeful purpose** than those in high-stress families who don’t experience strong developmental relationships.

SOURCE: A pilot survey of youth (ages 12 to 18) and their parents (633 families) in two communities in the Midwest and South US.

LEVERAGE: The power of sharing power in relationships.

Within developmental relationships, the strategy that seems to have the strongest association with many indicators of well-being is SHARE POWER. This finding holds true across all three pilot studies, including the perspectives of parents of younger children, parents and teens together, and students reflecting on their relationships with teachers. This finding suggests that increasing mutual respect, shared decision making, adjusting to each other, and negotiating when there are differences can be a powerful way to start strengthening the web of relationships in young people's lives.

Ideas for Getting Started

Use these ideas (based on the survey) to reflect on and enhance your relationship with your child.

Express CARE

1. Focus attention on your child when he or she is talking about things that are important to her or him. Put away the smart phone.
2. Ask follow-up questions so both you and your child know you're tracking.
3. Have fun when you're together. Laugh. Smile. Be silly. Don't always make it all about chores or homework or getting something done.
4. Find satisfaction in doing things for your child, even if those things aren't important to you.
5. Make an effort to understand your child's point of view when he or she shares ideas or opinions.
6. Do what you say you will do with your child. When you can't, apologize.

CHALLENGE Growth

7. Tell your child about people and ideas that have inspired you.
8. Talk with your child about the positive things he or she has to look forward to in the future.
9. Expect your child to do her or his best, even when doing something he or she doesn't like.
10. Help your child find her or his own solutions rather than just telling him or her what to do.
11. Challenge you child to try things that are a little hard for her or him.
12. Teach your child that making mistakes is part of learning.
13. Require your child to take responsibility if he or she does something wrong.

Provide SUPPORT

14. Praise your child for her or his hard work, whether he or she succeeds or fails.
15. Encourage your child to try things he or she might be interested in.
16. When you teach your child a skill, demonstrate it by breaking it into smaller steps.
17. Model the values, attitudes, and behaviors that you want your child to follow.
18. Do what you believe is right, even if others disagree.

Share POWER

20. Respect your child's opinions, even when you disagree.
21. When you're in a disagreement, take time to understand each other's point of view.
22. Be open to changing your opinions on important topics based on what you learn from your child.
23. When your child doesn't understand what you're trying to teach, try to show her or him in a different way.

19. When your child is not getting the help he or she needs from other adults, talk to the person and try to find a solution.

24. Develop new interests based on things you learn from your child.

25. Respect one another's point of view, even if you disagree.

Expand POSSIBILITIES

29. Find opportunities for your child to spend time with people who are different from your family.

30. Introduce each another to new music, art, or activities.

31. Introduce your child to other trustworthy adults who have a similar hobby or interest.

26. Teach your child about ideas or cultures that are different from your own.

27. Teach your child how the "real world" works—particularly if it doesn't work in her or his favor.

28. Show your child how to ask for help when he or she needs it.