

Positive Relationships

Description: Youth relationships among peers and with adults look different, but require the same principles of mutual respect, positive interactions, and a friendly, safe environment. Positive Relationships require empathy, sharing, trust, and respect.

Youth who struggle with Positive Relationships often:	Youth who have strong Positive Relationships often:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appear lonely or resistant to connecting with others • Do not relate well to peers or adults • Have poor attendance • Engage in maladaptive behaviors with other youth and staff (i.e. bullying, gossiping, fighting, bragging, defiance, etc.) • Are self-critical and ruminate on negative interactions and relationships. • Have difficulty trusting others • Appear clingy or over-reliant on certain peers or adults • Have issues with boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit respectful relationships with peers and adults, even if they are unfamiliar • Are easy to get along with and well-liked • Are outgoing, social, and comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings • Have appropriate, safe boundaries, both physically and emotionally • Have a group of peers with whom they feel they belong • Have a mentor or other positive adult role models

Best Practices and Evidence

Invest in One Another: Building strong, positive relationships requires investment in learning about each other as human beings. Showing genuine interest in and respect towards one another allows each youth and staff member to feel worthy and contribute to a positive program climate.

Evidence of a program that Invests in One Another include:

- Youth are greeted upon arrival and dismissal, using names and a handshake or high five.
- Staff prompt youth to share their experiences and interests whenever possible.
- Staff engage in daily positive conversations about topics of interest to various youth, especially those who are isolated or display challenging behaviors.
- Families are engaged in conversation at arrival and dismissal to share highlights from the day.
- Staff monitor how they relate with youth in order to maintain safe, respectful boundaries (e.g. spending time with all youth, not picking favorites, mindful of not over-sharing personal information in efforts to connect, etc.).

Teambuilding: Provide non-academic opportunities that put students at ease and allow them to be comfortable and form positive relationships. This can happen through teambuilding activities or program practices that support a team-like atmosphere.

Evidence of a program that incorporates Team Building include:

- Teambuilding challenges and games are used regularly to support connections and collaboration across social cliques.
- Program-wide events involve youth and staff working together to achieve a goal or to win a healthy competition.
- Field trips and real-world learning opportunities require youth to work together and try new things (i.e. ropes courses, service projects, or outdoor education).
- Morning circles or advisory periods are held, where groups can set a respectful, safe tone for the day. Circles encourage empathy, collaboration, and a sense of community.

Model Healthy Relationships: Explicit modeling of positive, healthy relationships provides common language for youth and staff to use in any context. Modeling is especially important when learning about healthy boundaries and resolving conflict.

Evidence of a program that Models Healthy Relationships include:

- Staff model appropriate, respectful, and positive interactions among each other.
- Staff model appropriate, respectful, and positive interactions to youth, especially with those who may be ostracized from their peers.
- When conflict, disagreement or anger arises between youth and staff, they address the issue collaboratively after allowing time to cool down.
- Staff narrate their own feelings and use of strategies to expose youth to common language. For example, during transition, a staff member may say out loud, “I am feeling overwhelmed by the mess in the classroom. I am going to take three deep breaths before figuring out a plan to fix this.”

1	2	3	4
<i>There is no evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>	<i>There is some evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>	<i>There is moderate evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>	<i>There is extensive evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>
Youth and staff show no interest in learning about each other outside of program objectives.	Youth and staff show surface-level interest in learning about each other outside of program objectives.	Youth and staff show interest in learning about each other outside of program objectives, but not everyone is involved in these interactions.	Youth and staff consistently show considerable interest in learning about each other outside of program objectives.

1	2	3	4
<i>There is no evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>	<i>There is some evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>	<i>There is moderate evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>	<i>There is extensive evidence of modeling healthy relationships.</i>
There are no program practices that support building positive relationships.	There are minimal, if any, program practices in place to support building positive relationships.	There are some program practices in place to support building positive relationships.	There are many program practices in place to support building positive relationships.

DRAFT