BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH

PARTICIPANT GUIDE
Mr. Marino

“I hated almost everything about the juvenile institution I was sent to at 14 years old except one guy I got along with pretty well and one staff member who worked in the evenings. Mr. Marino watched everything that was going on and enforced the rules, but he was fair in how he did it. He also took the time to have conversations with us and he remembered what we told him – something most of the others didn't do.

“I actually talked to him about how I always wanted to be a scientist – like a chemist or laboratory technician. He didn't laugh at that, even though it's a pretty nerdy thing to say. In fact, he brought me a book on experiments and even helped me try a few simple ones that we could do with the stuff that was available at the facility. He talked about me to the teacher that taught basic science, and she started giving me some extra reading and other interesting things to do in class.

“They helped me see that I could go after what I wanted to do – that science really was interesting for me and something I could do. Mr. Marino gave me confidence to talk to adults and find out what I need to do to get what I want. With the extra work I did in school there and a recommendation from the science teacher, I got into an advanced chemistry class when I got back to my school and am now studying to be a cardiovascular technician at a community college.

“I never would have done this without Mr. Marino’s support.”

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- What adults did you have positive relationships with as a child/youth?

- What were the characteristics of these adults that most influenced your relationships?

- How did they help you?
Today’s Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Roles of Youth Care Workers
- Healthy Relationships with Adults
- Healthy Relationships Among Youth
- You as a Role Model
- Communicating with Youth
- Identifying Challenges and Strategies in Building Relationships
- Reflections
Overall Curriculum Goals

• To help staff recognize how building healthy relationships with youth can improve youth outcomes while they are in the program and afterward
• To discuss how healthy relationship with youth in care can add to their capacity to maintain the safety and security of youth and staff
• To develop staff skills for building healthy relationships with youth

Learning Outcomes

In this workshop, you will be able to:
• Identify the purpose and importance of each of the multiple roles youth care workers need to have with youth
• Practice active listening and other appropriate communication skills staff need in order to be an effective role model for youth
• Identify the skills youth need to develop to engage in healthy peer-to-peer relationships
• Identify the challenges staff face in promoting and encouraging supportive relationships with and among youth
• Develop a personal plan for building healthy relationships with youth
Building Healthy Relationships With Youth

Dialogues

1. Saturday Night

**Person B:** Can you change the channel on the TV? We want to watch the basketball tournament.

**Person A:** As I read the behavior sheets, you haven’t got the points you need to stay up for the game. You have an early bed tonight. I believe Mr. Jones told you that before he left.

**B:** That’s so unfair! He just doesn’t like me. I did everything I was supposed to do and he still didn’t give me my points.

**A:** You have 15 minutes before early bed. Would you like to look at the places you didn’t earn points? Maybe I can help you figure out what you need to do to earn enough tomorrow. The tournament continues tomorrow night and maybe you won’t have to miss it.

**Questions:**

What is the relationship between Person A and Person B? How do you know?

When and why do you take on the role of Person A with youth?
2. **At the Game**

**Person A:** Let’s go, people! I want to see you hustle!

**Person B:** Put me in! Come on, put me in for the win!

A: Are you kidding? Last time you played, you fouled the other team every time you were in and we lost the game.

B: Okay, but you haven’t let me play for two games. I won’t let the team down, I promise!

A: If I see you going for the foul, I’ll pull you out so fast you won’t know what happened, AND you’ll get written up for poor sportsmanship this time.

B: Okay. I got it.

A: I want you to be the role model for teamwork.

B: I will!

A: Okay, go out there and show me what you’ve got.

**Questions:**

What is the relationship between Person A and Person B? How do you know?

When and why do you take on the role of Person A with youth?
3. **I Need To Talk To You**

**Person A:** Are you okay? I don’t see your usual smile.

**Person B:** I’m okay.

**A:** I don’t think so. Want to sit down and talk?

**B:** Yeah, okay.

**A:** So what’s going on?

**B:** I talked to my father and he told me my brother was shot. He’s in the hospital and I can’t go see him or do anything about it.

**A:** Oh man, that’s bad. Did you father say if he’s going to be okay?

**B:** I guess he got hit in his shoulder and he might not be able to use his arm. They won’t know for a while.

**A:** Do you know what hospital? Do you want to try calling him?

**B:** Can I? I just want him to know I’m thinking about him.

**Questions:**

What is the relationship between Person A and Person B? How do you know?

When and why do you take on the role of Person A with youth?
4. **What Happened?**

**Person A:** So what happened in the day room just now?

**Person B:** We got in a fight because Jason called me a *&%$#!

A: So he called you a name you didn’t like and then what did you do?

B: I hit him in his face! I’m not going let him say stuff like that to me in front of everybody!

A: So is that what bothered you – that other people heard him and you wanted to save face?

B: Yes! He does that all the time and I just went off!

A: Do you think there’s a chance Jason calls you names in front of everyone because he wants to get a reaction from you?

B: Well it works! He really makes me mad.

A: What would happen if you didn’t react, or even if you laughed when he says those things?

B: Hmmm... I guess he’d say something else and keep trying to make me mad.

A: And if you still didn’t get mad, do you think he might get bored and quit doing it?

B: I don’t know. Maybe. I don’t know if I can do that, though. He’s such a weasel.

A: Well, one thing I do with people who do things I don’t like is, I picture dumping a bowl of spaghetti and sauce over their head and seeing it drip down their face. It makes me want to laugh instead of get angry. Would that work for you?

B: I don’t know. Maybe I can try it.

A: Meanwhile, you and Jason both have some pretty serious consequences to deal with from the fight. I hope you can do better next time he says something to you.

**Questions:**

What is the relationship between Person A and Person B? How do you know?

When and why do you take on the role of Person A with youth?
Universal Youth Needs

Young people demonstrate a positive identity when they have a sense of personal well-being and a sense of connection and commitment to others.

1. Safety and Structure
   A perception that one is safe in the world and that daily events are somewhat predictable

2. Belonging and Membership
   A perception that one values, and is valued by, others in the family and in the community

3. Self-Worth and Ability to Contribute
   A perception that one is a "good person" who contributes to self and others

4. Self-Awareness and Spirituality
   A perception that one is unique and is intimately attached to extended families, cultural groups, communities, higher deities, and/or principles

5. Independence and Control Over One’s Life
   A perception that one has control over daily events and is accountable for one’s own actions and for the consequences one’s actions has on others

6. A Close, Lasting Relationship with at least One Adult
   A perception that one has a strong and stable relationship with an adult

7. Competence and Mastery
   A perception that one is building skills and that one is “making it” and will succeed in the future

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Resilience

Resilience is ‘the power or ability to return to the original form, position, etc., after being bent, compressed, or stretched; elasticity’.  

In people, it is the ability to overcome challenges of all kinds – trauma, tragedy, personal crises, life problems – and bounce back stronger, wiser and more personally powerful.

1 Dictionary.com
**Healthy Relationships?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Behaviors:</th>
<th>Healthy Relationships</th>
<th>Unhealthy Relationships</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Care about the youth’s future</td>
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<td>2. Tell a youth about your personal issues</td>
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<td>3. Spend time listening to what individual youth want to talk about</td>
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<td>4. Keep in touch with youth after they leave the program</td>
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<td>5. Trust that everything a youth tells you is true</td>
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<td>6. Get to know each youth over time</td>
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<td>7. Select youths you like for special activities and rewards</td>
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<td>8. Answer youths’ questions about health and sexuality</td>
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<td>9. Uphold your program’s values</td>
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<td>10. Treat youth with respect and courtesy</td>
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<td>11. Maintain firm boundaries for sharing information with youth</td>
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<td>12. Discourage youths from complaining about the program or staff</td>
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<td>13. Provide information about resources in the program and/or community that youths can use</td>
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<td>14. Encourage each youth to learn and grow</td>
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<td>15. Encourage each youth to do better each day</td>
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<td>16. Create a safe environment for youths</td>
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<td>17. Encourage youths to speak to you about what’s bothering them</td>
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Building Healthy Relationships
Self Development Plan

1. One healthy adult/youth relationship behavior I will work on is:

________________________________________________________________

I will work on it by: _________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

2. To help youths I work with improve their peer relationships, I will: __________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

3. As a role model, I will: _____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

4. To improve my communication skills, I will: __________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

5. My Strengths are: _________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

6. My Challenges are: ________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
# Building Healthy Relationships With Youth

## Youth Peer Relationship Skills Observation Worksheet

**Ratings:** L= Low/no skill; M= Moderate/medium skill; H= High skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Name: Behavior:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to others</td>
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<td>Handling friendly teasing</td>
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<td>Speaking up for self</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking up for others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing things with peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding things in common</td>
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Role Model Scenarios

Below are four fictional scenarios that could take place in a confinement facility that serves youth. As you read, consider the message that each youth care worker’s actions communicate to the youth with whom they work. Choose one example, imagine yourself as that youth care worker and, at the bottom of this page, reflect on the message behind your actions.

For example: “I speak well of colleagues: This demonstrates that I respect and care about them...”

- **Scenario #1:** While rushing to get to work on time, you throw on the same shirt you wore yesterday but do not notice the stain on the front. Then before leaving the house you answer the phone and have a conversation with a friend. By the time you get to work you are 20 minutes late and your kids are sitting around.

  What is the message behind your clothes and actions?

  - **Scenario #2:** You are new to the local juvenile detention facility. During your first day, you tell your group that they are not to call you by your first name – that they should address you as Miss Smith. You also explain that you will use each youth’s first name and not use nicknames. You tell the youth they need to do the same with one another.

  What is the message behind your words?

  - **Scenario #3:** You are in the common area or dayroom with the youths in your program during an unstructured period. One boy comes up to you and asks to talk to you alone. He tells you that he thinks his parents are homophobic. They told him he can’t hang out with Rupert and Max anymore. He’s upset and doesn’t know what to do. You tell him you empathize and then share a detailed personal story with him. You say that you lied to your parents about who you hung out with after school and they never found out.

  What is the message behind your response?
o **Scenario #4:** While facilitating a group activity one of your youths starts hiccupsing. The others begin laughing and teasing the young boy. You pause the activity and ask the group to remember their group agreements. You ask, is teasing allowed? If not, why not? You facilitate a discussion about the importance of group agreements and treating each other with respect.

What is the message behind your approach?
Assess Your Communication Skills

Check your skill level for each behavior:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communicating With Individual Youth</strong></th>
<th>(1) Low</th>
<th>(2) Somewhat Low</th>
<th>(3) Somewhat High</th>
<th>(4) High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Being an Active Listener (e.g., seeking to hear what the youth is really trying to communicate to you).</td>
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<td>2. Establishing Trust (e.g., demonstrating that the youth can have confidence and depend on you)</td>
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<td>3. Being Empathetic (e.g., demonstrating that you genuinely care about the young person)</td>
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<td>4. Being Present (e.g., demonstrating that you are in the moment, and not distracted, when relating to the young person).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Providing Feedback (e.g., responding in ways that explicitly address the concerns of the youth)</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Communicating With Groups of Youth</strong></th>
<th>(1) Low</th>
<th>(2) Somewhat Low</th>
<th>(3) Somewhat High</th>
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<tr>
<td>6. Being an Active Listener (e.g., seeking to hear what the youth is really trying to communicate to you).</td>
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Communicating with Teens\(^2\)

To the question, “How do you know a teacher or other adult in your school cares about you?” students overwhelmingly responded that the facial expressions and simple actions that a teacher makes convince them that the staff member cares about them. Words helped but actions won out.

It was less about praising the students and more about treating the students as important and knowing about them outside the confines of the classroom: “When I’m bothered, they help me by listening and encouraging me ... they talk to me as a person and friend—not just as a student.”

Essentially, students highlighted simple acts as ways they knew their teachers cared. They identified actions that take place in many classrooms across the state and nation everyday—actions that should take place in every classroom everyday. These include acting friendly, smiling, saying hello (especially outside of class), taking an interest in the student, and noticing when the student was troubled. Students advise teachers to do the following:

1. Develop friendships with students, and ask, “How was your weekend?”
2. Listen and give eye contact.
3. Greet us and ask, “How are you doing?”
4. Take time to say hello.
5. Know our names.
6. Get to know our stories.

Many students also described how their teacher “pushed” them in their schoolwork and that the students understood that by doing this they cared about both the student and what the student is achieving and can achieve: “They push me to do better—they have side conversations with you, pull you aside and listen...they nag me toward my goals and help me reach them.”

In addition, students appreciated being trusted by adults:

1. “They give you the benefit of the doubt when you tell a story.”
2. “They will understand my stress and give me a chance.”
3. “When they give me a second chance on a test or paper, I know they believe in me.”
4. “They give me responsibilities, which shows confidence in me.”

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\(^2\) [http://crs.uvm.edu/gopher/nerl/personal/comm/e.html](http://crs.uvm.edu/gopher/nerl/personal/comm/e.html)

References & Resources

WEBSITES:

Child & Youth Care Certification Board [www.cyccb.org](http://www.cyccb.org)


National Center for Youth in Custody [http://ncyc.npjs.org/](http://ncyc.npjs.org/)

The International Child and Youth Care Network [http://www.cyc-net.org/network.html](http://www.cyc-net.org/network.html)


ACTIVITIES:

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READING:


Youth Development Institute. *Core Competencies for Youth Work*.

Youth Work Central. [http://www.youthworkcentral.org](http://www.youthworkcentral.org)