The Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which 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. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

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<th>Elements</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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| 1. Express Care  | - Be Dependable
                    - Listen
                    - Believe in me
                    - Be warm
                    - Encourage            | Be someone I can trust.
                    Really pay attention when we are together.
                    Make me feel known and valued.
                    Show me you enjoy being with me.
                    Praise me for my efforts and achievements. |
| 2. Challenge Growth | - Expect my Best
                        - Stretch
                        - Hold me accountable
                        - Reflect on failures  | Expect me to live up to my potential.
                        Push me to go further.
                        Insist I take responsibility for my actions.
                        Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks. |
| 3. Provide Support | - Navigate
                        - Empower
                        - Set boundaries       | Guide me through hard situations and systems.
                        Build my confidence to take charge of my life.
                        Put limits in place that keep me on track. |
| 4. Share Power   | - Respect me
                        - Include me
                        - Collaborate
                        - Let me lead           | Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
                        Involve me in decisions that affect me.
                        Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
                        Create opportunities for me to take action and lead. |
| 5. Expand Possibilities | - Inspire
                        - Broaden horizons
                        - Connect            | Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.
                        Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
                        Introduce me to people who can help me grow. |

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

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