



Relationships that Matter: 5 Keys to Helping Your Child Succeed

A Workshop Facilitator's Guide



Understand and focus on five areas of parent-child relationships that are key to children's success in school and other areas of life with Search Institute.

This workshop for parenting adults was developed by Search Institute based on its Framework of Developmental Relationships. It was tested in partnership with the Connecting Parents to Educational Opportunities program (CPEO) in Minneapolis Public Schools.

This one-time workshop introduces the key ideas that parents and youth explore together in *Keep Connected*, a seven-week interactive learning experience for families to experience together as children enter middle school and adolescence. For more information, visit www.KeepConnected.info.

About Search Institute

Search Institute is a non-profit organization that partners with schools, youth programs, community coalitions, and other organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity.

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Discovering what kids need to succeed

Relationships that Matter: 5 Keys to Helping Your Child Succeed

A Workshop Facilitator's Guide

Overview

This 90-minute session helps parents understand and focus on five areas of parent-child relationships that are key to children's success in school and other areas of life.

Learning Objectives

Participants will . . .

- Discover that parent-child relationships are key to students' success.
- Identify the five keys to strong relationships with their children.
- Share with each other ideas for strengthening their relationships with their children.
- Commit to doing one thing to strengthening their relationship with their own children.

Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the session, particularly the parts that require you summarize the 5 keys to parent-child relationships (and the research behind them) in your own words.
- Make copies of all the handouts for all participants. These will be distributed throughout the session. Do not attach them all to each other in advance.
- Have pens or pencils available for all participants.
- Reproduce the five mini-posters for Activity #3. If you can, enlarge them so they are easier for the whole group to see. Bring tape to post them on the walls.
- Have five markers available for use on the flipcharts for Activity #3.

Session Plan

1. Welcome and Introductions

10 minutes

- a. Welcome participants to the session. Have them introduce themselves to each other by:
 - Sharing their first name; and
 - Telling about one thing they love to do with their families—in one sentence.
- b. Say something like: *We usually talk about the practical challenges we face in supporting our children in their education. We are going to focus less on what happens in school and more on what happens in our homes. Specifically, we are going to look at our relationships with our children and how these matter in influencing positive outcomes. We'll focus on five key areas of those relationships that can really make a difference for our kids in all areas of their lives, including school. Our goal is to provide you with the information and practical steps to strengthen relationships with young people in your lives.*
- c. Summarize the objectives of the session (above). Distribute the session overview (Handout 1).

2. Discussion: Who Made a Difference for You?

10 minutes

- a. Say: *To get us thinking about the ways we help our children grow up well, let's first think about what we experienced with our own parents and other adults. Although some of us may have had difficult relationships with our parents or other adults, we are going to focus on the positive things that important adults did for us as we were growing up.*
- b. Ask participants to form pairs. Encourage them to pair up with someone they don't know well, as this will help them learn fresh perspectives.
- c. Have people tell their partner about an adult in their life when they were growing up who made a difference for them. Who was this person? (It could be a parent, a family member, or someone else.) What are positive things he or she did that made a difference for you? Give people each 2-3 minutes to tell their conversation partner about this person.
- d. Say that we'll share some of the stories with the whole group in a few minutes, so we don't need to have a report out from these conversations yet.

3. Introduce the 5 Keys to Parent-Child Relationships

15 minutes

- a. Post the sheets with each of the five keys to parent-child relationships on the wall (spread around the room) where everyone can see them. Say that these five keys to relationships with kids come from extensive national research by Search Institute.
- b. Distribute Handout 2: "Five Keys to Strong Parent-Child Relationships." Explain each of the five keys to positive relationships briefly, putting the information in the handout into your own words. (You may also ask volunteers to read different parts of the handout.)
 - 1) **Express care:** Show your children that you enjoy being with them. You care about things that are important to them.

- 2) **Challenge growth:** Help your children to see possibilities for their own futures. Encourage them to work hard to be their best.
 - 3) **Provide support:** Guide and encourage your children as they work to complete tasks and achieve their goals.
 - 4) **Share power:** Take your children's ideas seriously. Work together to solve problems and reach goals.
 - 5) **Expand possibilities:** Help your children connect with people, ideas, and opportunities that help them learn and grow.
- c. Conclude (in your own words): *When kids experience these five qualities in their relationships, they are more likely to grow up well. They do better in school. They are more caring. And they develop attitudes and skills that will help them throughout their lives. They also become more resilient, which helps them overcome challenges they face in life. **In fact, the research suggests that strengthening these five areas of our relationships is one of the most important things we can do as parents for our kids.***

If you wish, give people to comment on that final statement. Does it make sense to them? Why or why not? If they identify other things that they believe are more important, you don't need to debate which things matter more than others. The main message to communicate is that relationships really matter. They mattered to us as we were growing up. And they matter to our children today.

- d. Say: Think back to the people who mattered for you when you were growing up that you talked about with your partner. How did what they did fit with one or more of these keys? (If you wish, give an example based on your own experience.) Have people share their ideas.

You can note that some of these people were not parents, but they also formed positive relationships in participants' lives. These five keys are important for many different types of relationships, but this session is focused on how we build them as parents.

- e. After you've heard several examples, ask the whole group to discuss:
- 1) Are some of these five keys to positive relationships easier to do than others? Which ones? Why?
 - 2) Which ones are harder to do? Why?
 - 3) Which ones don't make sense to you? (Ask other parents to talk about their own experiences in those areas as a way of clarifying.)

4. Summarize the Research on the Five Keys

10 minutes

- a. Say that Search Institute surveyed more than 1,000 parents with children ages 3 to 13. These parents came from all backgrounds and cultural groups, roughly matching the population of the United States. Search Institute asked how much parents did each of the five keys that we've been talking about. Ask:
- 1) Which key do you think was most common?

(Answer: Express care. Others that were strong were challenge growth and provide support.)

2) Which do you think was least common?

(Answer: Expand possibilities. Share power is also lower in most families.)

b. Distribute Handout 3: “Research on Five Keys to Parent-Child Relationships.” Invite different class participants to volunteer to read aloud each of the key findings.

c. Then ask:

- What finding from the study is most encouraging to you as a parent? Why?
- What finding from the study do you think is most important for other parents like you to hear?

Tell parents who are interested that they can download the whole study from Search Institute’s website, www.search-institute.org/dff (no cost).

5. Stories of Five Keys to Parent-Child Relationships

20 minutes

a. Go around the room and count off the participants from 1 to 5. Form five small groups—one per key—by grouping all the “ones” together, all the “twos” together, etc. Have the five groups get together for this discussion next to one of the five flipcharts so that each group works on one of the five keys.

If you have a group of fewer than 15, decide together whether to assign two sheets to one group or if you’ll just focus on fewer keys for this session.

b. Give each group the page from Handout 3 (“Stories of Positive Parent-Child Relationships”) that is connected to their flipchart. (For example, the group by the “Provide Support” flipchart would get the sheet with the story about “John’s Dad.”)

c. Explain that these stories each tell the story of parent-child relationships from the perspective of a young person. It is important to pay attention to how our kids are experiencing our relationships with them, not just how we view our relationship.

NOTE: The instructions for the groups are also printed on the handout.

d. Ask a volunteer in each group to read aloud to the small group the example on the sheet with their group’s number.

e. After reading the story, have the group work together to find the different ways the young person in the story is experiencing their assigned key. (For example, if their key is “provide support,” they would find examples of support they see in their assigned story.)

f. Then, building on the ideas that they gleaned from the story, have each group brainstorm the 3-5 most important ways they believe parents generally can put this relationship key into practice. (They don’t need to limit ideas to the specific situation in their assigned story.)

- g. Have a volunteer in the group use markers to write the ideas on their flipchart in large print so everyone can read them.
- h. When all the groups have 3-5 ideas, ask someone from each group to report their ideas to the whole group. Be sure to thank each group for its ideas.

If you wish, collect the flip charts, type up the ideas, and then send them out to all the parents as a follow-up resource. If you lead multiple classes, you could combine the lists of ideas.

6. Take Home the Conversation and a Commitment

10 minutes

- a. Say the following in your own words: I hope you have enjoyed talking with other parents about these five keys to relationships with your kids. I also encourage you to talk about them in your family, including with your kids.
- b. Give each person a copy of these four final handouts:
 - Handout 4: “Discussion Starters for Families.”
 - Handout 5: “A Family Relationships Checklist”
 - Handout 6: “The Keep Connected Website”
 - Handout 7: “What I Will Do This Week”
- c. Read aloud a few of the questions from Handout 4 (“Discussion Starters for Families”) that you think are intriguing. Ask parents to think about how they might use some of these in their family. Emphasize that they only need to use a few questions, so they can pick ones that fit their family.
- d. For Handout 5 (“A Family Relationships Checklist”): Say that this checklist goes into more depth about the actions that are part of a strong parent-child relationship, including more details on each of the 5 keys. Encourage parents to complete this checklist on their own in the next week.

If they want an extra challenge, have them give copies of the checklist to other family members to complete. Then discuss their responses during a family conversation at dinnertime or another time when you can relax and learn together.

- e. For Handout 6 (“The Keep Connected website”): Say that there are more discussion starters, quizzes, and activities focused on these five keys that they can try (no cost) on Search Institute’s website, www.KeepConnected.info. Encourage participants to check it out through a computer or mobile device. They might take the quiz related to the key that they are most interested in strengthening.
- a. Now turn to Handout 7 (“What I Will Do This Week”). Read through the handout aloud, and then ask participants to complete this on their own.

If any participants wish, invite them to share their commitment with the larger group or with a neighbor. (Telling others about our commitments makes it more likely that we’ll follow through.) However, they may keep it private if they wish.

7. Conclusion

5 minutes

- a. Remind people that they already have a relationship with their children. Some parts of those relationships may be going really well. Some parts may be very difficult.
- b. These five keys can help us keep perspective on what really matters in our relationships with our kids. We don't have to be perfect, but we can all find at least one area where our relationship can grow. And we can ask each other to help us through the ups and downs we experience.
- c. Remind them of their three commitments:
 - 1) Try 1 or 2 discussion-starter questions.
 - 2) Complete the relationship checklist. If they want to add an extra challenge, give copies of the checklist to everyone in their family to complete. Then talk about it together over dinner or at another time when your family is together.
 - 3) Follow through on their commitment to work on one of the five keys.
- d. Thank participants for coming to the session.



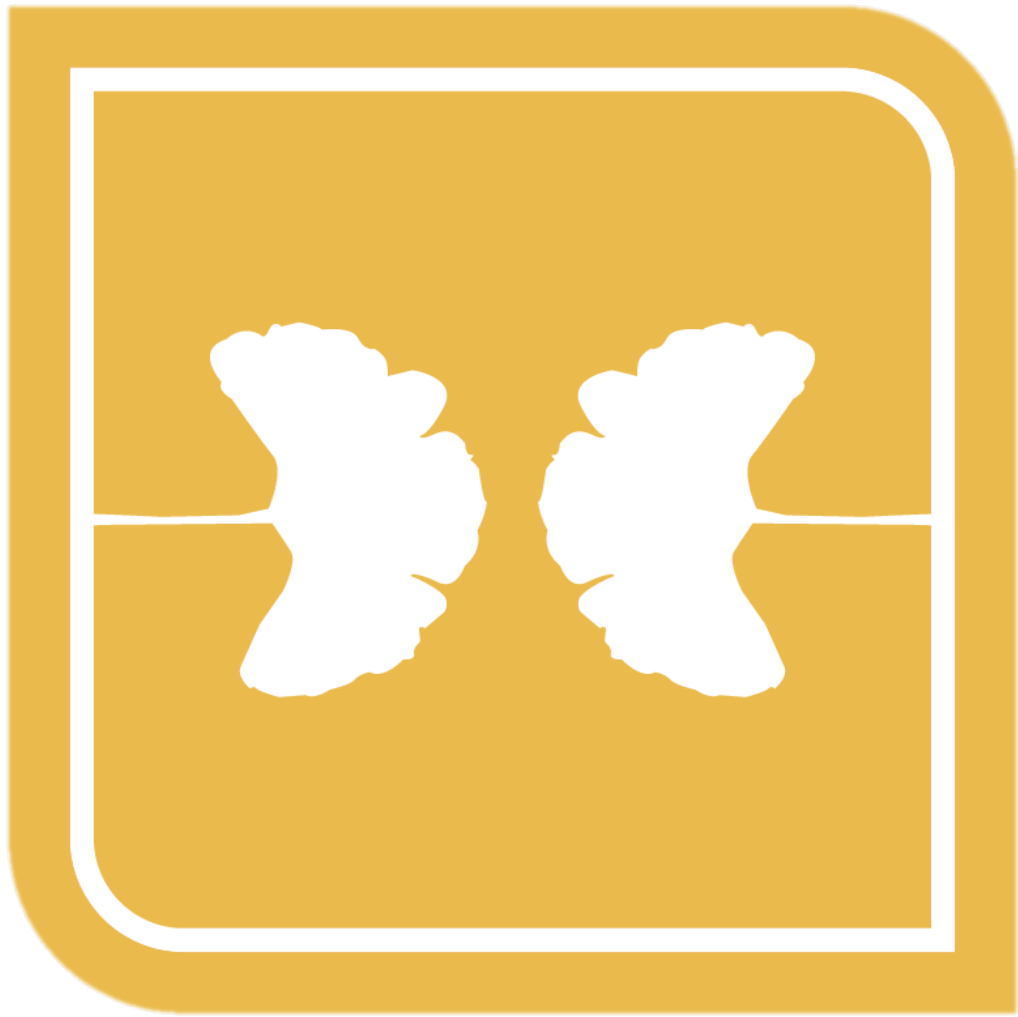
**Express
Care**



Challenge
Growth



**Provide
Support**



Share Power



**Expand
Possibilities**

Relationships that Matter: 5 Keys to Helping Your Child Succeed

Overview

This workshop helps parents understand five areas of parent-child relationships. You will . . .

1. Understand that parent-child relationships are key to young people's success.
2. Learn about five keys to strong relationships with your children that come from national research.
3. Share with each other ideas for strengthening your relationships with your children.
4. Commit to doing one thing to strengthen your relationship with your own children.

About Search Institute

Search Institute developed this session based on its national research with families. Search Institute is a non-profit organization that partners with schools, youth programs, community coalitions, and other organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity. The organization is based in Minneapolis. It conducts research and works with schools and other partners nationally and internationally.

For more information,
visit www.search-institute.org

HANDOUT 2

Five Keys to Strong Parent-Child Relationships

There are five keys to strong relationships between parenting adults and their children or youth, according to Search Institute research. These five keys are:



Express care: Show each other that you enjoy being together. Show that you care about things that are important to each other.



Share Power: Take each other's ideas seriously. Work together to solve problems and reach goals.



Challenge Growth: Encourage each other to be your best and to be responsible for staying on track. Learn from failures.



Provide Support: Guide and speak up for each other. Help each other overcome obstacles, finish tasks, and reach goals.



Expand Possibilities: Help each other connect with people, ideas, and opportunities that could enrich their lives.

Why these 5 keys matter

When young people experience these five keys in their relationships with parenting adults:

- They develop attitudes and skills that will help them throughout their lives.
- They become more resilient, helping them overcome challenges they face.

These keys can be really important to work on when you're going through transitions, such as changing schools or entering the teenage years.

HANDOUT 3

Research on Five Keys to Parent-Child Relationships

Minneapolis-based Search Institute surveyed 1,085 parents of 3-13 year olds in 2015, and then another 564 parents of children ages 9-18 in 2017. Parents were from all backgrounds across the United States. The study focused on their relationships with their children. Here are key findings:

There are five keys to strong parent-child relationships:

- Express Care
- Challenge Growth
- Provide Support
- Share Power
- Expand Possibilities

Most parents say that their relationships are strongest in three areas: (see chart*)

- Express Care
- Challenge Growth
- Provide Support

% of parents who reported that their relationships with their kids are strong in each of the five key areas:



Relationships are more influential to developing social-emotional strengths (such as motivation, responsibility, and caring for others) than other characteristics of families, such as income, age of children, background, or family composition.

Among all the keys, Share Power is most consistently linked with many social-emotional strengths. Yet parenting adults have a harder time doing it.

Relationships help youth do better when facing challenges.

Discuss:

- What parts of the study match your experiences?
- What does the study tell you about your own family's relationships?



Express Care

Cedric's Mom

Cedric has grown up “a really shy kid.” He “didn’t really talk to anybody.” He loves that his mom is not judgmental and “always here for me.” “She listens a lot and is very open,” Cedric says. They can talk about anything, and “it won’t be weird or uncomfortable.”

His mom is someone Cedric can count on. “She is like a backbone,” he explains, “someone that you know will always be there regardless of what happens.”

“My mom is very good at picking up on my energy,” he says. She is “always checking in, seeing how I’m doing.” She always wants to know what he’s doing and thinking about. They share a sense of humor. “She jokes around with me a lot.”

Cedric’s mom regularly lets him know that he is important, valuable, and loved. “I know my mom would do anything for me. Even when we argue or fight, I know she always loves me.”

Group Instructions

1. Someone read the story aloud.
2. Find examples in the story that show ways to **express care** in parent-child relationships.
3. Building on the ideas you saw in the story, brainstorm as a group **3-5 ideas** of ways you believe parents can express care in their relationships with their children. (These ideas can go beyond what you read in the story.)
4. Write your ideas on the flip chart.
5. Be ready to report three ideas to the whole group.



Challenge Growth

Jasmine's Dad

Jasmine knows her dad would do anything for her. One of the important things he does is that he “pushes me out of my comfort zone.”

She explains: “There’s no slacking around with my dad. You don’t come to him with shortcuts. Yeah, he sees me slacking a little bit, and then he throws something funny in to get my attention. Or he’ll be like, ‘Let’s go read at the library. I’ll come with you.’”

Her dad tells Jasmine the truth when he disagrees with her. “If he disagrees with me, I’m going to know it. It’s not super harsh and in your face. But he’s honest with me, and it’s good to have someone in your life set the record straight.”

“Dad knows what I was going through, and he made me feel like I was a better person, like I was worth something—worth more than I had put myself out to be.”

Group Instructions

1. Someone read the story aloud.
2. Find examples in the story that show ways to **challenge growth** in parent-child relationships.
3. Building on the ideas you saw in the story, brainstorm as a group **3-5 ideas** of ways you believe parents can express care in their relationships with their children. (These ideas can go beyond what you read in the story.)
4. Write your ideas on the flip chart.
5. Be ready to report three ideas to the whole group.



Provide Support

John's Dad

John plays several sports, and he's active in an after-school program. His dad helps him figure out his schedule, and then helps him get to practice, games, and other activities.

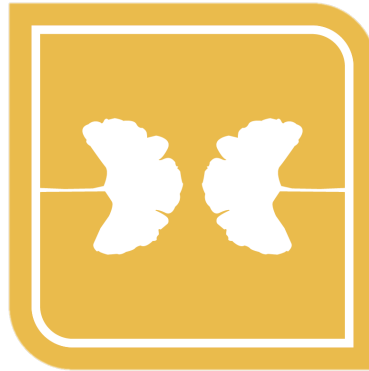
When John was facing some tough times with his friends, he went to his dad first. He remembers his dad listening, and then "giving advice without being either judgmental or too opinionated." That feedback really helped.

"Anything you need, you can go to Dad about," John says. "You need help with school or some other part of life, he tries the best he can, even if he isn't sure what to do."

He tries to boost John's spirits when John is down. "He'll tell me, 'Don't give up hope—that faith you have in yourself. Don't ever give that up.'"

Group Instructions

1. Someone read the story aloud.
2. Find examples in the story that show ways to **provide support** in parent-child relationships.
3. Building on the ideas you saw in the story, brainstorm as a group **3-5 ideas** of ways you believe parents can express care in their relationships with their children. (These ideas can go beyond what you read in the story.)
4. Write your ideas on the flip chart.
5. Be ready to report three ideas to the whole group.



Share Power

Kiara's Mom

Kiara and her mom have a lot of respect for each other. Kiara believes this really helps her take responsibility for herself and learn to make good decisions.

Whenever they have disagreement or have to solve a problem, Kiara knows her mom will ask her what she thinks—even if her mom makes the decision in the end. More and more, though, Kiara has noticed that they “talk out” problems until they both reach the same conclusion. “It’s like we decided it together,” Kiara says.

Recently, the family was planning a trip for a family reunion, and her mom asked Kiara to plan some of the details about what they would do and how much it would cost. “I know Mom could have done it much faster than me. But I really liked learning. I’m proud that I was able to do that.”

It’s not that they always get along perfectly. “We often bump heads cause our opinions be different,” Kiara says, “but we always end up finding areas where we can agree.”

Group Instructions

1. Someone read the story aloud.
2. Find examples in the story that show ways to **share power** in parent-child relationships.
3. Building on the ideas you saw in the story, brainstorm as a group **3-5 ideas** of ways you believe parents can express care in their relationships with their children. (These ideas can go beyond what you read in the story.)
4. Write your ideas on the flip chart.
5. Be ready to report three ideas to the whole group.



Expand Possibilities

Chen's Grandma

Chen lives with his grandma, and he loves to hear her stories “about the old days” in their family. One thing Chen loves about his grandma is that she is always finding new things to do together. Her motto is, “try new things in life.”

“She is constantly giving me something to try or learn about,” Chen says. “She takes me to places that I never would have thought I would have explored or been interested in.”

She also watches for things that Chen is interested in. When Chen started being interested in photography, his grandma introduced him to a friend who is a photographer. Chen was so inspired that he enrolled in a photography class at school. “She always has something new to offer me—new ideas, people, and opportunities.”

“For me,” Chen says, “Grandma is like a bridge to the bigger world. Through her, I see so many possibilities for myself and the future.”

Group Instructions

1. Someone read the story aloud.
2. Find examples in the story that show ways to **expand possibilities** in parent-child relationships.
3. Building on the ideas you saw in the story, brainstorm as a group **3-5 ideas** of ways you believe parents can express care in their relationships with their children. (These ideas can go beyond what you read in the story.)
4. Write your ideas on the flip chart.
5. Be ready to report three ideas to the whole group.

HANDOUT 4 Discussion Starters for Families

Use these questions to talk with your children about relationships in your family. The goal is to get to know each other better. There are not right or wrong answers.

These questions are based on Search Institute research. It found five areas of parent-child relationships that help children and teens grow up well.

Express Care



Different families express care in different ways. Talk about how members of your family express care to each other.

1. When are times you've felt close as a family? What made that time memorable?
 2. What sacrifices have others made for your family? How have those sacrifices affected you?
 3. What do you enjoy doing together as a family that you have not been able to do lately? What do you enjoy about it?
-

Challenge Growth



Challenging growth focuses on the ways we inspire or push each other to work hard, take risks, and overcome obstacles.

4. How has someone inspired you to take on a challenge? How did they motivate you?
 5. How does challenging other people to grow either help or hurt your relationship?
 6. What are some challenges your family has faced together? How did you grow while dealing with those challenges?
-

Provide Support



Everyone needs help from other people. It can be tricky to find a balance between having others support us and being responsible on our own.

7. Who is someone you admire who encourages you to pursue your goals? What does this person do that really helps you?
 8. What was a recent time you struggled with a challenge? How did people in this family encourage you?
 9. Have people tried to help you when you didn't want it? How did you deal with that?
-

Share Power



Families are stronger when they respect each other, negotiate through conflicts, and give others a voice in decision making.

10. How do different members of your family influence others in your family? (Think of at least one way each person influences each other family member.)
11. What are easy topics for making decisions in your family? What areas are harder?
12. Think of who makes which decisions in your family. (This could include schedule, money, activities, cooking, or chores.) How might these parts of your family be different if a other family member made those decisions? Have fun thinking of the possibilities!

Expand Possibilities



It can be exciting and stimulating for family members to help each other explore new possibilities together.

13. What is one thing you really enjoy that someone else in the family introduced you to? (This could be something like music, ideas, or foods.) Tell how they introduced you to it.
14. What is enjoyable about spending time with people who are different from your family? What can make it hard?
15. Who are significant people outside your immediate family who have had a big influence on your life? How have they influenced you?

FOR MORE DISCUSSION STARTERS, quizzes, and activities to try with your family, visit www.KeepConnected.info

HANDOUT 5 **A Family Relationships Checklist**

Give each family member a copy of this checklist. Have each privately check the action that you think is almost always true in your family. Then talk about your responses. Share examples and stories to explain. There are no right or wrong answers.



- We trust each other.
- We really pay attention to each other when we're together.
- We make each other feel known and valued.
- We show each other that we enjoy being with each other.
- We praise each other for our efforts and achievements.



- We take each other seriously and treat each other fairly.
- We involve each other in decisions that affect each person.
- We work together to solve problems and reach goals.
- We give each other chances to make decisions and take the lead.



- We expect each other to live up to our potential.
- We push each other to go further.
- We insist that we each take responsibility for our own actions.
- We help each other learn from mistakes and setbacks.



- We guide each other through hard situations and systems.
- We help each other be strong, confident, and take charge of life.
- We stand up for each other when we need it.
- We set limits that keep each other on track and moving forward.



- We inspire each other to be hopeful for the future.
- We expose each other to new ideas, experiences, and places.
- We introduce each other to people who can help us grow.

HANDOUT 6 The Keep Connected Website

www.KeepConnected.info

A free online resource to help families strengthen relationships through shared experiences.

Key Features

Focuses on practical strategies to build parent-child relationships, based on Search Institute's research.



CHECK IT

Quizzes for families to do together and then talk about how they see things the same and differently.



READ IT

Illustrated children's books with guides that emphasize strong relationships and strong families.



TALK ABOUT IT

Discussion starters for parents and kids—and for parents with other parents



LEARN ABOUT IT

What the research says about each topic.



TRY IT

Short self-guided family activities that explore their relationships and kids' development while enjoying time together

HANDOUT 7 **What I Will Do This Week**

The key area of parent-child relationships that I want to improve is . . .



Express Care

— Show my children that I enjoy being with them and care about things that are important to them.



Challenge Growth

— Help my children to see possibilities for their own futures and to work hard to be their best.



Provide Support

— Guide and encourage my children as they work to complete tasks and achieve goals.



Share Power

— Take my children's ideas seriously and work together to solve problems and reach goals.



Expand Possibilities

— Help my children connect with people, ideas, and opportunities that help them learn and grow.

What is one thing you can do to strengthen this part of your relationships?

In the next week, I will _____
to strengthen my relationship with my child or children in this area.

Selected Resources for Nurturing Developmental Relationships

Nurturing Relationships with, within, and among families

Tools

www.KeepConnected.info

Connecting with Families through Developmental Relationships: Ideas for Schools and Youth-Serving Organizations (booklet)

So What Do You Want to Talk About? Ready-to-Use Discussion Starters for Families

Digital Check-Ins to Keep Connected

Everyday Challenges for Today's Families: Ready-to-Go Presentations for Parents

Keep Connected: Strengthening Parent-Youth Relationships (workshop series for families)

Reducing Risks by Strengthening Relationships: A Workshop for Families

Search Institute Workshops (in-person and online)

Engaging Families: A Relationship-Centered Approach

Keep Connected Institute for Workshop Facilitators

Strengthening Family Relationships: A Workshop for Parenting Adults

Engaging Families Through Relationships: Practical Online Learning for Educators and Youth Workers

Nurturing relationships with and among young people

Tools

The Developmental Relationships Survey

Developmental Relationship Boosters

Principles for Promoting Peer-to-Peer Relationships

The Relationship Builder's Guidebook: Activities and Approaches to Enhance Developmental Relationships

Creating a Team Where Relationships Flourish

Search Institute Workshops (in-person and online)

Developmental Relationships: Bring Intention to Practice

Introduction to Development Relationships: A Self-Paced Online Course

Youth Lead: A Relationship-Based Leadership Experience for Youth



For more information

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