

Relationships start with you(th)

Adults often ask each other, 'What can I do to support youth?' This fact sheet asks you to engage in this exploration of 'what works?' with youth directly through showing vulnerability, establishing helpful boundaries and listening without judgment.

Building relationships is about connection.
"I notice. . ." "I remember. . ."
"These are some opportunities I can offer. . ."



What we know

- * Connection can be between adults and youth as individuals. It can also be between youth and opportunities with the community as a whole.
- * Helpful relationships happen when adults and youth give and receive support in the relationship.
- * Youth thrive and are more successful when they feel connected to important adults in their lives.
- * Support is important for youth to have their social and emotional needs met and for them to gain important skills in these areas too.
- * Expect discomfort as the relationship develops and seek understanding not perfection.

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What you can do

- * **Listen**
Engage youth fully by using eye contact, putting aside electronics, and asking questions.
- * **Ask open-ended questions**
Requiring more than a yes/no answer helps youth to describe their thoughts and feelings.
- * **Affirm**
Say something positive about youth to help them recognize their strengths and reduce their tendency to self-criticize.
- * **Support youth's interests**
Attend their extracurricular activities, sporting and other events.



More for you

Caring adults are key to helping young people thrive. There are so many ways you can support the youth you care about.

Find additional tips and resources by visiting



go.wisc.edu/youthtoolkit