



## What Youth Want from Supportive Adults Training Tool Kit

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8RdtJxcLo4>

Video length: 31:01

### Panel participants in video

- Andrea Turtenwald, Family Relations Coordinator – Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health, panel moderator
- Aniah Gilbert, 17 year old senior at Ronald Reagan High School in Milwaukee
- Kayla Winston, 17 year old senior at Case High School in Racine

### Discussion questions

After watching the "What Youth Want from Supportive Adults" video, discuss the following questions with the group you viewed the training with. If you viewed the training individually, consider these questions.

1. Think about a supportive adult you had when you were young. What was it about them that made you want to spend time with them?
2. Describe a relationship you have with a young person? Is it a supportive relationship? How could you improve it based on what you heard in the video?
3. What are your go-to strategies to connect with young people? (See back side of the "Youth Share Thoughts on Supportive Adults" flyer in the toolkit for ideas.)
4. Many young people miss the opportunities to build supportive relationships with adults due to bias, prejudice, and systemic exclusion based on their race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, or other differences. Where do you see that playing out in your communities/work? What can you do to change that?
5. Listening to young people to understand their experiences and what they want from adults is important to youth. How can you create opportunities to listen to young people in your work and/or community?

### Resources

- Search Institute
  - [Developmental Relationships Framework flyer](#)
  - [Developmental Relationship Help Young People Thrive](#) – a comprehensive guide to the Search Institute's developmental relationships framework. It identifies five key elements, with 20 specific actions, that have been proven to increase academic growth and learning, further social-emotional growth, and reduce high-risk behaviors.

- Office of Children’s Mental Health – [Youth and Adults Share Thoughts on Supportive Adults](#) infographic flyer
- Office of Children’s Mental Health – [Youth Share What They Want Adults to Know About Youth Mental Health](#)

### Notes from video

#### **Tell us about your supportive adult and your relationship with them**

**Aniah** – A prior mentor is her supportive adult. The adult kept communication lines open after the formal mentor relationship ended. She listened to Aniah and offered constructive feedback. The adult didn’t just agree with Aniah.

**Kayla** – Her supportive adult respects that everyone is human and have their own experiences. The adult respects what Kayla has done, whether it was good or bad, and provides Kayla constructive criticism. She treats Kayla a mature, young adult and is open and welcoming.

**Challenge to viewers:** think about how you can replicate these attributes in your relationships with youth.

#### **Search Institute Framework – Expand Possibilities**

Connect me with people and places that broaden my world

- Inspire me to see possibilities for my future
- Introduce me to people who can help me grow
- Broaden horizons – expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places

#### **Aniah**

- Making connections with youth is appreciated.
- When an adult can’t help with a certain topic, they should admit that and help connect the youth with someone who can help or has that expertise.
- Approach a new situation with youth realizing that you don’t know what the youth is going through or what they are feeling. Be open and willing to hear what the youth is saying. Take the information the youth is giving you. If the adult is open minded, they will help the youth be open minded.
- Youth aren’t all the same. One interaction an adult has with a young person isn’t going to be the same with another youth. It doesn’t matter if they are the same age, race, sex – everyone is different.

#### **Kayla**

- Adults sometimes want to compare their experiences to a youth’s, and that can block the ability to expand a youth’s possibilities. Youth live in a different time and generation.
- Youth want to have comfort in their relationships with supportive adults. Youth won’t feel comfortable going to someone who will override their experiences. Receive the youth as they are and not what the adult was like.
- If adults are open and comfortable with youth, the youth will feel comfortable going to them a second or third time. If adults are able to inspire one youth by being open minded, more youth may come to them.

**Challenge to viewer:** Be open minded. Be curious about biases and leaving those at the door.

### **Search Institute Framework – Share Power**

Treat me with respect and give me a say

- Respect me – take me seriously and treat me fairly
- Collaborate – work with me to solve problems and reach goals
- Include me – involve me in decisions that affect me
- Let me lead – create opportunities for me to take action and lead

#### **Aniah**

- It is important that youth are included in conversations. Often, adults put youth into groups and speak for them. Adults can't assume what youth are thinking in any situation.
- If adults were putting together a presentation/project for other adults they would include the other perspectives in identifying what they should be talking about. That same principal applies when working with youth. All the different viewpoints we have make us valuable to the conversation. We interact with a lot of other youth and people – at school and in the community.
- Remember to ask for feedback from youth. Don't assume that if youth doesn't say something in a situation that they don't have anything to say. Youth won't always offer information as they don't want to appear disrespectful. The adult can ask if there is something they could have done differently, improved on.

#### **Kayla**

- There are a lot of adults who speak to youth as if they are younger than they are and dumb things down. When that happens it comes off as if the youth aren't valued and are helpless. It doesn't feel good to be spoken down to. Youth have brains and have ideas.
- "Let me call you out." There should be room in the relationship for a youth to call the adult out and point out mistakes the adult makes. Adults need to be able to take feedback. Calling an adult out is OK as long as the youth does it in a respectful manner. Everyone learns from mistakes – youth and adults.
- Lead with respect, provide opportunities, ask how this relationship is going.

**Challenge to viewer:** Include youth in conversations, don't speak for them. Let youth lead and accept feedback.

### **Search Institute Framework – Challenge Growth**

Push me to keep getting better

- Expect my best – expect me to live up to my potential
- Hold me accountable – insist I take responsibility for my actions
- Stretch – push me to go further
- Reflect on failures – help me learn from mistakes and setbacks

#### **Kayla**

- First step to challenging growth is to establish boundaries. Boundaries are good to have between two people or a group. They step up respect for people and establish how each person should be/wants to be treated. Demonstrating boundary setting by adults helps show youth how to establish boundaries. Boundaries create safe places, and feeling safe is important for youth.

**Aniah**

- Being mature – realizing that everything isn't about you.
- Boundaries help show where youth are at, and adults, and where they can meet in the middle.
- Mistakes are not always bad, they provide a way to learn how to improve. Reflect on failures in a positive way, like identifying where things went wrong and what they will do about it.

**Challenge to viewer:** Come to relationships with humility.

**Confidence – How supportive adults being confident can help youth grow**

**Kayla** – When an adult leads with confidence it helps youth grow in their confidence, helps them with what they want to speak about and share.

**Aniah** – Being confident doesn't mean that 24/7 everything is great and that you are doing well. We need to understand that every day isn't going to be good for everyone. Being confident is about having the mindset and ability to communicate, be real. Youth need to realize they don't need to be doing well all the time. If we see adults this way it will help youth. On the days when we don't feel the best we should be able to communicate that too. On those days when we just can't seem to get it right or carry everything on our shoulders, it will help us if we see that supportive adults have similar challenges.