

Talking Points



These strategically framed talking points can be used across messengers and channels to change the conversation about developmental relationships. To learn more about why these talking points are structured as they are, check out the annotations.

Here are a few ideas on how to get started with this list of talking points:

- Incorporate them into written and spoken communications.
- Consider them when asked a *what*, *who*, *where*, *when*, *how*, or *why* question about developmental relationships.
- Use the points separately or in combination, as a given situation allows.
- Repeat them as-is, or put them into your own words.
- Practice them out loud so you are ready to deliver them when you need to.
- Weave them into a new “elevator speech” about your work.
- Revise existing communications (e.g., website, literature).
- Post them in the comments section of a news article or blog post.
- Pose them as questions to institutional leaders or other decision-makers.
- Build them into responses to frequently asked questions.
- Share them with colleagues and advocates, experts, and communications professionals across the field.



What are developmental relationships?

1. A developmental relationship allows each person involved to experience care, challenge, support, shared power, and expanded possibilities that nourish their growth.

Use the term “developmental relationships” freely. It proved more effective than any of the tested alternatives at helping people see these relationships as important, impactful, realistic, and feasible.

2. We all need developmental relationships as we grow up. Unfortunately, some young people don’t have them—and that’s unacceptable.

Answering the question “what are developmental relationships?” is a great opportunity to appeal to the *Inclusive Opportunity* value.

3. Developmental relationships help young people grow. By nurturing self-expression, critical reflection, and social skills, they continually open up new possibilities for success and new opportunities to make a difference.

Avoid suggesting that this issue is primarily about either personal fulfillment or social progress, two values which have a backfire effect on public understanding and support. Instead, use words like “success” and “nurture” to segue from the *metaphor of Roots of Success* to the *value of Inclusive Opportunity*.

Who is involved in developmental relationships?

4. Young people benefit from having multiple different kinds of developmental relationships with different types of people. Coaches, neighbors, members of faith communities, relatives, and friends can all play valuable roles.



5. “I make a point to ask the young people in my after-school program how things are going. Building a developmental relationship can start by learning what they’re good at, encouraging them to push themselves and take the lead when the time is right and lending an ear when they just need to talk.”

Where do developmental relationships occur?

6. Developmental relationships can sprout in many places, such as summer camp, the basketball court, after-school care, the playground, community centers, dance practice, and the library. These relationships ground young people just as much as relationships that develop at school or at home.

● Highlight how institutions and organizations facilitate relationship building.

7. Just like a tree’s roots pull nutrients from different parts of the soil to help it flourish and grow, young people benefit from having relationships with multiple adults in the various places they spend their time.

● Use the *Roots of Success* metaphor to explain that young people can have developmental relationships with many different people in many different places.

8. Relationships are most likely to take root if young people are supported by policies and structures that encourage and reinforce relationships, rather than undermining them.

9. It's pretty obvious when we stop to think about it: If policies that promote developmental relationships are in place, relationships have a better chance of taking root.

10. Developmental relationships can become a part of our everyday routines. Greeting young people, or stopping to listen to them, can push a young person to grow and help them work towards their goals.

11. Youth-serving organizations and schools that prioritize relationship building in professional development trainings, curricula, well-designed facilities and funded programs will make it more likely that all young people have the opportunity to build developmental relationships.

• Cite examples of the kinds of system-level practices and policies that institutions—i.e., all of us—can take to facilitate (rather than impede) relationship building.

12. Developmental relationships are the roots of our young people's success. They are needed early on to provide strength, stability, and nourishment—all of which support social, emotional, civic, and academic growth.

• Develop the *Roots of Success* metaphor to explain when and how developmental relationships take place. Words like “strength,” “stability,” “nourishment,” and “growth” can all help!

13. Developmental relationships also help build up resilience to stress and adversity. They keep young people solidly rooted and better able to withstand life's storms.

Why are developmental relationships necessary?

14. Developmental relationships matter because they shape a young person's social and emotional development, motivation and engagement in school, civic participation, and other future prospects.

After establishing *Inclusive Opportunity* as the driving value behind why developmental relationships matter, you can bring in aspects of the bigger picture and collective benefits to society.

15. No young person should have to navigate life without developmental relationships to ground them; yet, we know that some are.

Appealing to the *Inclusive Opportunity value* reminds the public of our shared commitment to creating an inclusive society that affords opportunity to all. At the same time, it primes people to acknowledge the reality that—because of structural inequality and discrimination—we are currently falling short of our goal.

16. Let's do a better job of making sure all young people—regardless of race or ethnicity, income, geography, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other life circumstances—have the developmental relationships they need to thrive.

Use collective language, like “we,” “us,” and “our,” to indicate that this is a broad social issue that affects everyone, and that fostering developmental relationships is a shared responsibility.

17. This isn't just about young people's future; it's also about their present. Young people need the nourishment of developmental relationships today to grow and thrive.