

Try This ... Not That



A communications strategy starts with knowing what to say and what to leave unsaid. This chart of new themes to try—compared with words and phrases to avoid—is a quick tour of a new framing strategy for developmental relationships.

Try This

Use the name “developmental relationships.”

Compare developmental relationships to the **roots of a tree or plant**. This strategy helps highlight the nurturing role developmental relationships play in young people’s lives.

Draw out the comparison by using words like “nourish,” “nurture,” or “sustain” to describe how strong, stable relationships—where both young people and adults express care, challenge each other’s growth, support and encourage each other, collaborate and share power, and expand future possibilities—foster development and growth.

Talk to audiences about nurturing relationships and opportunities for all young people based on what they need to be their best and to thrive.

The **Inclusive Opportunity value** highlights the importance of relationships all across our society—every young person needs access to relationships as a part of their development.

Not That

Don’t call them “scaffolding,” “bridging,” or “transforming” relationships.

These names don’t communicate *why* relationships are so essential for young people.

Don’t compare developmental relationships to “active ingredients.”

The “activation” image does not completely explain how relationships are foundational in young people’s lives. On top of that, “ingredients” are factors that can be added—or subtracted or substituted. This is the opposite of what we want to communicate about developmental relationships.

Avoid making developmental relationships about *fulfillment* or helping young people and adults find meaning.

This explanation is too individualistic and does not highlight the shared benefits and responsibility of nurturing developmental relationships.



Try This**Not That**

Name the barriers to engaging in developmental relationships that young people face.

Do not present developmental relationships as the strategy for society reaching its full potential.

A *Social Progress* argument—the idea that relationships move our whole society forward—can backfire and make relationships seem like a means to an end.

Make structural change seem feasible and include concrete examples of ways to prioritize relationship building in your messaging.

Do not use overly aspirational terms like “transformative” to describe developmental relationships.

This can make relationships seem out of reach, rather than possible anywhere.

Use a diverse set of messengers—mentors, teachers, coaches or friends—who can speak to their own experiences of developmental relationships.

Don’t limit your examples of developmental relationships to only teachers and parents.

New messengers can stretch audience’s assumptions about how adults and young people interact.

Relying on these messengers is a missed opportunity to broaden people’s assumptions about where relationships take root.
