

Title: Intentional Connection: Creating Empowering Youth Adult Relationships Moving Toward More Positive Outcomes

Facilitator and room number: Beth Fraster; 1.201

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Number of participants: 11

Sequence of content/methods/activities:

This interactive training was designed to build knowledge, skills and attitudes that enhance the capacity of adults to connect and support the development of empowering youth adult relationships. Building on the work of the Search Institute, this training prepares adults to develop relationships that powerfully and positively shape young people's identities that help them develop thriving mindsets and create opportunities for young people to share their opinions, thoughts and voice in youth development programmes and mentoring relationships. During the workshop the facilitator used a mix of different methods, such as large and small group discussion, reflection activities, group and individual brainstorming and interactive/movement activities.

She started with a presentation of her organisation "Mass Mentoring Partnership", and umbrella organisation for mentoring programmes and youth developments programmes based in Massachusetts (USA). After that she made the workshops participants think about adolescents through different activities and finally addressed the value of developmental relationships for youth by presenting among other things the developmental relationship framework.

Main tools and findings presented by the facilitator:

The facilitator introduced several group activities that can also be used in coordinator's and mentor's trainings. The participants were able to do these activities and reflect on them as a group. The following activities have been carried out and the following tools have been presented:

- Thinking back activity: "Take a moment and think back to your childhood/adolescence: Was there a specific adult who had your back?...";
- Activity on identity and cultural responsiveness "Getting to know you": "List all the groups you feel you belong to";
- Video about brain development of youth followed by a small group discussion;
- Short documentary about school drop outs followed by a small group discussion;
- Presentation of and working with the "Developmental Relationship Framework".

Results of the Workshop:

"Research tells us: Relationships matter! Relationships matter much more than the amount of attention they receive in most schools, programmes, families and communities."

When we work with youth we always accompany them for a certain period in their lives. Youth adult relationships are not about 'just letting young people grow': adults have an important role to play.

They have to learn how to have good, developmental relationships with youth. Also mentors need to take time to think about this. The role of adults is to support young people to be/become resilient.

During the workshop the role of the adult and its related power have been discussed: **what support/ what knowledge do we need in order to be “good adults”**. For example, it can be helpful to know more about the brain development: which synapses are responsible for the emotional skills in the brain during adolescence and how can adults stimulate the brain of young people to make these brain synapses stronger.

“Positive youth development is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organisations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognises, utilises, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and giving the support needed to build their leadership strengths.”

Some key strategies **to create a supportive relationship**: showing enjoyment when being in contact with youth, showing no judgement.

Main statements highlighting the results of the discussion:

- “Those people saw me” (about the natural mentors).
- “She was able to balance being supportive and challenging me” (about the natural mentors).
- “Cultural responsive practices (...): our power can be helpful, but our power can be hurtful.”
- “Youth are not vessels to be filled but fires to be sparked.”
- “...adults are not comfortable with silence. We should train them to be in a silent mood. Just go for a walk and don't look to the kid. Just be in silence.”

Main outcomes from the activities/methods applied:

Participants learned how important developmental relationships are for young people and where they can find valuable studies on that.

Participants have a better understanding of how to support young people after they got more knowledge about the adolescent's brain development as well as remembered their own adolescents.

Participants learned how to apply “the Developmental Relationships Framework” that focuses on 1) express care, 2) challenge growth, 3) provide support, 4) share power, 5) expand possibilities.

References of literature, if mentioned:

- Mass Mentoring Partnership: <http://massmentors.org/>
- **Critical mentoring (book)**
- Short Video on Youtube about brain development: “The Teen Brain under Construction”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9Ya0mHsIgM>
- Short documentary on Youtube: “Don't quit on me: What young people who left school say about the power of relationships”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpFG6mNAkAc>