

# Positive Youth Development

## A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT

### Meeting Plan

#### Background



Youth are directly impacted by relationships with caring adults, and if the adult is outside the family, better social development and improved parental relationships occur. Young people learn about different parenting styles and adult views from adults who are not their parents. Continued positive contact with those caring adults creates a mentoring, supportive relationship that nurtures the young people as they grow and develop.

#### **Assessment: Do positive, caring relationships exist between youth members and adults in our group?**

- Do youth and adults who are not their parents have continual contact with each other over time? What do they do together?
- Do adults treat youth in this group with respect? How can we tell?
- Do youth feel comfortable sharing and interacting with adults in our group about their needs and interests? How do we know?
- Do adults allow youth in this group to make decisions? Are they included in decision-making processes? What decisions have they made?
- Do adults in this group provide guidance to youth members through coaching, feedback, and discussion? How can we tell?
- Do adults convey a sense of truly caring about all young people in our group? How do they show it in their relationships with them?

**Anything shared here we need to discuss or work on together?**  
***(Write it down.)***

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#### Roll Call Suggestions



Describe a positive experience where you dealt with an adult in this group who was not your parent.

Tell us how you know when an adult in this group respects you.

Tell us about an adult in this group with whom you feel comfortable sharing and interacting.

Share one decision adults in this group allowed you to make.

Share one time an adult in this group provided you with guidance.

Share how you know an adult in this group cares about you.

#### Activities to Emphasize a Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult

*Refer to the following Activities:*

An Adult Who Influenced Me  
Four-of-a-Kind  
How Are My Social Skills?  
Tower Building  
Planning My Project Adventure

# Activity Guide for A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT

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## An Adult Who Influenced Me

**Materials needed for each participant:**  
Worksheet, and colored pencils, markers,  
or crayons



This activity allows each group member to reflect on an adult in their life that is influencing or has influenced them. They think about what the important person is/was like, why they are/were important to them, and what the adult does/did or says/said that makes/made a great impact on them. They should think about the positive relationship and what makes/made the adult caring in their eyes.

**After reflection takes place and worksheets are completed, here are two suggestions:**

- Have each 4-H member tell about the person on whom they reflected, describing the relationship they share/shared. Everyone must reveal something.
- Ask for volunteers who are willing to share about their special person.

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## "An Adult Who Influenced Me" Processing Questions

### *Sharing*

- What memories came to mind when thinking about your special person?
- Was it hard to think about your childhood? Why or why not?
- Was it difficult to identify an adult who influences/influenced you as a child? Why or why not?

### *Processing*

- What was one detail you remembered about your special person that surprised you?
- What, if anything, did you notice about the sharing that took place in the group?
- What did you notice today that special people and their relationships with others have in common?

### *Generalizing*

- Why is it important for us to realize what makes people special and important to us?
- Do you think everyone has someone special and important in his or her life? When might someone not have a person like that as part of his or her life?
- How does thinking about special and important people help us appreciate them?

### *Applying*

- What can you do to develop a special and important relationship with an adult?
- Are there adults already in your life that you would like to know better? If so, what can you do to make that happen?
- Are there relationships between young people and adults around you that you can study? If so, how might you learn about them?

*Source: Peggy Adkins, et. al. 1990. Training Trainers to Teach. Land-Grant University Cooperative Extension System, Extension Service-United States Department of Agriculture, and National 4-H Council: Washington, D.C.*

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## Four-of-a-Kind

**Materials needed for each group of four:**  
Worksheet, and colored pencils, markers, or  
crayons



This activity allows group members to realize that in all groups, members have similarities and differences. They need to recognize if a group is to function effectively and accomplish common goals, they must respect both similarities and differences present in the group. Characteristics of group members make each group unique, and if used well, can strengthen how well the group works together and how much they accomplish together.

- Divide the large group into smaller groups of four members each.
- Give each small group a 'Four-of-a-Kind' worksheet, and either colored pencils, markers, or crayons.
- Tell them to talk within their group and identify four ways they are all similar or alike. (Encourage them to search for similarities that are not obvious.)
- Instruct them to write or draw the four similarities in the middle of the box.
- Then tell them to each find one way they are different from the other three members of the group. (Again, they should search for differences that are not obvious.)
- Have each group member write his/her first name and their differences along the outer edge of one side of the box.

**After similarities and differences are identified and noted, here are two suggestions:**

- Have a spokesperson for each small group report to the large group their four identified similarities and introduce each person and his/her difference.
- Have each small group choose a spokesperson to report to the large group the four identified similarities; then ask each small group member to share his/her name and their individual differences with the large group.

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## "Four-of-a-Kind" Processing Questions

### *Sharing*

- Was it easy or hard to identify the four similarities in each small group? Why was it easy or hard?
- Was it easy or hard to identify a difference for each small group member? Why was it easy or hard?
- What characteristic categories did each small group discuss in their search for similarities and differences? If your group had an adult in it, did s/he have an impact on what was discussed?

### *Processing*

- Did people seem comfortable sharing characteristics about themselves within their small group? Why or why not?
- How quickly did each small group reach consensus on similarities and differences to record?
- Did you learn anything new about group members today? If so, what were new realizations for you?

### *Generalizing*

- How do you think similarities and differences among group members influence group effectiveness?
- How do you think groups deal with similarities and differences among group members?
- Do young people deal with similarities and differences differently than adults do? Why might that be so?
- When might it be beneficial for group members to be alike? When might it be beneficial for group members to be different? Does the same hold true for the adult members of the group?

### *Applying*

- What similarities and differences do you have with your friends and family members?
- How can you learn about similarities and differences among your friends and in your family?
- When is it important for you to respect characteristics of people with whom you come in contact? Is it ever not important? Does it matter if you are dealing with an adult rather than another young person? Why or why not?

# Activity Guide for A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT - 5 -

## How Are My Social Skills?

**Materials needed for each group member:**  
Checklist, pencil, Steplist, newsprint pad,  
easel, and markers



This activity allows a group to determine what social skills are present in their group and which ones need to be strengthened for youth and adult group members to effectively relate to each other. They can identify certain skills needed most in the group and then work on incorporating them into the group's mode of operation. By first identifying steps needed to practice certain skills and then role-playing those steps, youth and adult group members gain confidence in relating to each other. Then when they really need to get along and work together, they are experienced communicators and have a strong foundation to help them through difficult situations!

- Have all youth and adult group members complete the 'Social Skills Checklist'—when working with younger members, you may need to read each statement aloud as they complete their assessment.
- Have youth and adult members work in pairs (one youth and one adult if possible) to share results of their checklist responses.
- Have them identify skills on which they need to improve.
- Have pairs use the 'Social Skills Steplist' for each identified skill—outlining steps to complete to practice and develop the skill.
- Have pairs role play the steps to practice the identified skills.
- Once practice has occurred, ask pairs to volunteer role-playing to the large group skills they identified and practiced.
- Newsprint a generated list of skills now present in the large group.

### **If your group is small with few adults involved, here are three suggestions:**

- Share results of the completed 'Social Skills Checklist' as a large group—identify skills the group wants to improve together, and outline as a large group steps needed to practice the identified skills. Then have members work in pairs to role-play the steps.
- Have adults work with small groups of youth members to outline steps needed to practice the identified skills, and have small group members take turns role-playing the steps within their small group.
- Utilize teenagers to complete tasks stated here for adults.

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## “How Are My Social Skills?” Processing Questions

### *Sharing*

- What social skills similarities and differences were shared in our group?
- How did it feel to complete the 'Social Skills Checklist' and then share your responses with others?
- Did anybody's responses surprise you?

### *Processing*

- How hard was it to assess your skill level using the 'Social Skills Checklist'?
- How hard was it to develop the steps needed to practice identified skills?
- Why do we sometimes feel awkward practicing skills in role-plays?

### *Generalizing*

- In general, do you think people are good at the social skills listed on the 'Social Skills Checklist'? If not, why not?
- What types of people are good at social skills?
- Do you think it is important for adults to practice social skills? Why or why not?

### *Applying*

- If you could pick a place to start improving your social skills—family, friends, school, or 4-H—which place would you start? Why start there?
- Who can you name that might be able to help you improve your social skills?
- What consequences might there be for someone who has poor social skills?

*Source: Arnold P. Goldstein, Robert P. Sprafkin, M. Jane Gershaw, and Paul Kline. 1980. Skill-streaming the Adolescent. Champaign, IL: Research Press.*

# Activity Guide for A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT - 7 -

## Tower Building



### Materials needed for each small group:

Manila envelope of equal supplies including one letter sized piece of cardboard stock, various sizes and weights of paper, three plastic straws, three pipe cleaners, and scotch tape of equal amounts (also have scissors and masking tape on hand)

This activity helps small groups understand how decisions are made. They work together using resources provided to design and construct a freestanding tower within a specified amount of time. Important topics to cover in the processing discussion include personal leadership styles, individual and group goals, individual and group decision making processes, participation levels, utilizing available resources, taking initiative, and working together as a team.

- Divide the large group into random teams of three to five members—making sure teams are of equal size and adults are interspersed among the teams.
- Give each team a manila envelope of supplies.
- Tell teams they have thirty minutes to design and build a freestanding tower from the supplies provided.
- Stress that the goal of the activity is to work together as a team to build the tallest tower possible.
- Announce, "It is time to begin." to start the activity and "Time" at the end of the thirty minute construction period.

**To raise the level of enthusiasm and competitiveness during this activity, here are four suggestions:**

- Have in your possession a pair of scissors and a roll of masking tape—tell the groups you are the keeper of these items and if they need to cut paper or secure additional stronger tape, they must come to you to dispense it to them.
- Periodically tell the group how much time they have left in the thirty minute time allotment—tell them more often as the end of the allotment nears.
- Announce after five of the thirty minutes have elapsed that you have a prize for the group that builds the tallest tower—select small and appropriate recognition items to give group members at the conclusion of the activity.
- If the group is comprised of older members, place an additional restriction on them of "No talking."

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## "Tower Building" Processing Questions

### *Sharing*

- How do you feel about the tower you have just built?
- What were some of the effective decisions your team made?
- What roles did team members play in building the tower? If you had adults on your team, what roles did they play?

### *Processing*

- In order to build your tower, what did you do as a team that you would not have been able to do alone?
- What did you learn about working together on a team by participating in this activity?
- What advice would you give to a team charged with building a tower under similar conditions and limitations?

### *Generalizing*

- Why is it important to plan or discuss a team project with other team members before attempting to complete it?
- What other times have you had to use available resources to complete a project?
- What kinds of decisions do adults in this group allow you to make on your own? What kinds of decisions do you need to make with adults in this group?

### *Applying*

- How can you improve your skills in building things or putting things together?
- Think about the next three months for you. What are examples of projects or assignments that you need to complete? What did you learn through the tower building activity that will help you in those projects or assignments?
- What decisions do you want to make on your own (without adult help or influence) over the next year? If you need adult help, whom will you turn to?

# Activity Guide for A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT

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## Planning My Project Adventure

Materials needed for each youth/adult pair:  
Planning Guide and pencils



This activity helps young people in 4-H groups identify and recruit an adult to help them with a project. They develop a positive caring relationship as they develop and carry out their project idea together.

- Guide a discussion with the young people in your group on whom they might consider recruiting to work with them on a project—parents, relatives, neighbors, teachers, youth ministers, coaches, friends, or other adult community members.
- Discuss with them how to approach the potential adult helper—when and where to ask for help, what words to use, etc.
- Have youth work in pairs to practice role-playing the recruitment conversation.
- Discuss possible hesitations the adult might mention that would prevent them from agreeing to assist—help the youth members to address the reservations so they will feel prepared for the recruitment visit.
- Give youth members one week to recruit their adult helper.
- Hold a planning meeting with youth-adult pairs where they work together to develop the 'Planning My Project Adventure' guide.
- Periodically check with the pairs on how their project relationship is progressing.
- Address any concerns they have relative to the positive caring relationship as well as the actual project.

**To foster and build confidence in your young people as they recruit their adult helpers, here are three strategies to consider:**

- Have younger members work in pairs on a project—and recruit one or two adult helpers.
- Pair an older member with a younger one on a project—and have them either recruit one adult helper or two.
- Have adult leaders in your group assist youth members in identifying adults they can approach for help and practicing the recruitment visit.

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## "Planning My Project Adventure" Processing Questions

### *Sharing*

- How did you feel throughout this activity?
- What was the hardest part about recruiting an adult helper? What was the easiest part?
- How did the development of your project idea progress with adult help?

### *Processing*

- What did you do to recruit your adult helper?
- What did you learn through this activity about how you work with adults?
- What was your project idea?

### *Generalizing*

- Why is it important to learn how to work well with adults?
- What other times have you had to ask adults for help?
- Who are the adults in your life you would most likely ask for help?

### *Applying*

- Can you think of other times when you will need to ask adults for help?
- What projects do have coming up over the next six months where you would benefit from adult assistance or involvement?
- What will you do differently the next time you ask an adult for help with a project?