

Workshop Title: Creating and Maintaining Healthy Relationships

2024 Leadership and Life Skills Summit for Foster Youth

Workshop Duration: 50 minutes

Learning Description:

Regardless of where young people are placed in the child welfare system, they need to develop boundaries, emotional health, and the skills to build lifelong relationships. There are specific tips and tools that can help young people overcome the trauma of their pasts and navigate healthy adult relationships. Participants will leave with concrete tools to develop personal boundaries and build trusting, restorative relationships.

Learning Outcomes: Participants will:

- Learn about Developmental Relationships
- Identify people within their current Circle of Support, and how to enlarge and add to that circle
- Discuss the importance of healthy Boundaries

Diversity Issues Addressed:

Culture of Foster Care: Youth in and from foster care are connected by a common culture cultivated by shared experiences.

Handouts:

- Circle of Support handout
- Boundaries diagram
- Developmental Relationships handout

Agenda:

- 1.) Introduction and Purpose of Workshop
- 2.) What Are Developmental Relationships?
- 3.) How Can I Build Upon My Current Circle of Support?
- 4.) How Can I Build and Maintain Healthy Boundaries?
- 5.) Question and Answer Portion

Training Outline:

1.) Introduction and Purpose of Workshop

- Trainer: Shares purpose of workshop and how their lived experience makes this a topic of high importance to them.

2.) What Are Developmental Relationships?

- Trainer: Explains what Developmental Relationships are, and hands out diagrams to participants.
- Whiteboard Activity: Five categories listed in grids, as listed below. Youth participants can raise their hand and share who in their personal lives has this type of relationship with them:

Express Care:	Challenge Growth:	Provide Support:	Share Power:	Expand Possibilities:

3.) How Can I Build Upon My Current Circle of Support?

- Trainer: Explains what a Circle of Support is, and hands out diagrams to participants.
- Individual Exercise: Filling out the Circle of Support diagram. Youth participants can write down what their current circle of support looks like. Afterwards, some participants can report out if desired.
- Group Discussion: Ways to add to current Circle of Support.

4.) How Can I Build and Maintain Healthy Boundaries?

- Trainer: Shares the “air mask” analogy and explains the importance of healthy boundaries and the risks of not maintaining boundaries.
- Small Group Exercise: When Helping You Is Hurting Me activity.

Supplies: Basins, marbles and paper boats.

Instructions: Participants add one marble for each challenge:

Example:

1. You just moved out on your own for the very first time.
2. You are trying to juggle work and school.
3. Your biological sister moves in with you.
4. She doesn't have a job.
5. Her boyfriend moves in with you too.
6. He isn't working either.
7. Your sister gets pregnant.
8. Your sister and her boyfriend get into a fight.
9. Your landlord evicts you.
10. You are looking for another apartment, but don't have enough money for rent and deposit.

- Large Group Exercise: Boundaries role play, if time allows:

Sample Scenario:

You run into a biological parent after foster care. They have heard that your college is being covered by the Pell Grant, and that you received a refund check after your tuition was paid. They want you to give them some money.

- Group Discussion: Trainer explains what cognitive dissonance is, and how forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciliation.

Cognitive dissonance can be defined as “an internal contradiction.” We all want to believe that we are good people. So if we do something harmful to another person, we feel that prick of our conscience. Since we cannot live in a state of “cognitive dissonance” for an extended period of time, we have to somehow make it right in our heads.

So, for a biological parent who was abusive, or who allowed/enabled abuse, their choice is:

- To tell themselves that what they did wasn't wrong (*denial*)
- To tell themselves that the child or teen deserved it (*excuses*)
- To confess and admit responsibility (*best option, but the hardest one*)

Sadly, cognitive dissonance can occur in the minds of abuse victims as well. When a parent is the perpetrator, rather than the protector, that clashes with everything that a child instinctively knows. So, might a child or teen be tempted to do?

- Tell themselves that what the parent is doing isn't wrong (*denial*)
- Tell themselves that they deserved it (*make excuses for the parent*)
- Tell themselves that a parent should be protector, and that the fact that theirs is not, is due that parent's choice and not a reflection of the child's worth (*best option, but not easy*)

Forgiveness vs. Reconciliation:

People often think that forgiveness and reconciliation are the same thing. But they aren't.

To forgive is: To renounce anger and resentment against another person for an offense perpetrated by that other person.

To reconcile is: To reestablish a close relationship between those two people.

Those two definitions are NOT the same.

1.) Forgiveness takes one person: It's a choice you make to free yourself from anger and bitterness. You can forgive another person and still keep yourself safe from them.

2.) Reconciliation takes two people: You can only make choices for yourself. If the other person is abusive or in deep denial, then their actions and their choices might be showing you that they are a destructive influence on your life. And you have every right to protect yourself from people like that. Part of being an adult is deciding whom you will and will not let into your world.

5.) Question and Answer Portion: (if time allows)

- *Do participants have any additional questions?*
- *What is one thing that you learned today that you plan to put into practice?*
- *What's one concept that you plan to share with a fellow young person in or from foster care?*