What’s in a Developmental Relationship?
Mapping People who Shape Our Lives

Description
Participants are introduced to Search Institute’s Developmental Relationships Framework and are invited to begin mapping developmental relationships in their own lives.

Objective
- Build and strengthen relationships among participants
- Build and strengthen relationships between participants and leaders
- Introduce Search Institute’s Developmental Relationships Framework

Planning and Preparation

Participants: Any

Materials:
- Copies of “The Developmental Relationships Framework” handout
- Copies of “My Developmental Relationships” Map
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Half sheet of paper for each participant

Time: 30 minutes

Set up:
- This activity can be done in any setting; however, participants will need a hard surface to write on whether a table, desk or clipboard.
Facilitator Notes:

Be aware that participants will have varying levels of access to developmental relationships in their lives. Consider the participants’ unique situations and be prepared for the following scenarios:

- Young people may not be able to think of many people they have relationships with, either because they do not have many or because they have trouble coming up with them on the spot. Be prepared with prompts to help them think of relationships they have - think outside the box! Examples include friends, family, mentors, coaches, teachers, neighbors, youth program leaders, etc.

- Some young people may be able to list many relationships; others may be able to list very few. Be prepared to affirm students who may have fewer and remind students that the number of relationships they have does not indicate success or failure on their part.

- Participants may have initial confusion about the elements of the Developmental Relationships Framework and/or the map. Make sure you are familiar with both and ready to answer questions.

Facilitator Instructions

1. Hand out the Developmental Relationships Framework. Let participants know this framework has been developed over time by Search Institute, a research organization that studies important relationships that help people grow. Ask everyone to be thinking about important relationships in their own lives while they look at the framework together. Read through the framework out loud together, beginning with the introduction then moving on to each element and its actions/definitions, giving anyone willing a chance to read. (Or ask if someone will start with the first element after you read the intro, and go in a circle while giving them a choice to pass or proceed.) After you finish reading through the framework, ask if anyone has any questions or initial thoughts about the framework.
2. Pass out half sheets of paper. Ask participants to think to themselves about people that make their lives better in some way. Have them think about people in all parts of their lives, such as their home, school, youth organizations, neighborhood, community centers, faith or spiritual communities, and other places. Have them write each of these people’s names down on the half sheet of paper. (They could also choose to write who the person is in relationship to them, e.g. - mom, piano teacher, soccer coach, etc.)

3. After participants have finished writing, hand out the “My Developmental Relationships” mapping sheet. Note that the graphic has concentric circles, representing places in our lives, and wedges that represent the five elements of developmental relationships. Have participants write their name in the middle circle. Then, for each person on their list, have participants think about the place where this person impacts them most, and what it is that person does that is most helpful. Have participants write the person’s name in the appropriate space. Let youth know that they will be sharing their map with one or two other students.

For example, a teacher who always asks you for updates on your hobbies or interests may be really good at Expressing Care. Write their name in the “Express Care” wedge in the “school” circle.

4. After everyone has had a chance to add all their names to their maps, divide participants into pairs or trios. Have each participant share their diagram with their partner or group, naming a few of the people and what they do that is helpful.

5. Ask participants (still in their pairs or groups) to look over their maps and talk about what they notice about their maps. Let participants know there are no right or wrong maps or required number of relationships. You may use the following questions for discussion:

a. Where do you have the most developmental relationships? (e.g. school, community, etc.)

b. Where do you have fewer developmental relationships?

c. Which elements do you experience the most? (e.g. express care, challenge growth, etc.)

d. Which elements do you experience the least?
Reflect
Discuss these questions as a large group:

• What are some things you learned about relationships in your life today?
• Are there places in your life you’d like to have more relationships? Are there elements you’d like to experience more of?
• Where do you think others would put you on their map? What elements do you think you practice the most with others in your life?
• What surprised you as you reflected on your relationships?

Taking Action (optional)
1. Have each person decide something they will do to thank a person on their diagram in the next week.
2. Have each person decide one developmental relationship action they will take with another person this week. (e.g. “I will really listen to my sister.”)

Putting It Into Practice
If you see participants throughout the week, take time to ask them more about the ways they practice developmental relationships with others. Find out more about the people and places they impact the most.
## The Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Express Care</strong></td>
<td>Be dependable. Be someone I can trust.</td>
<td><strong>Show me that I matter to you.</strong> Be dependable. Be someone I can trust. Listen. Really pay attention when we are together. Believe in me. Make me feel known and valued. Be warm. Show me you enjoy being with me. Encourage. Praise me for my efforts and achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge Growth</strong></td>
<td>Expect my best. Expect me to live up to my potential.</td>
<td><strong>Push me to keep getting better.</strong> Expect my best. Expect me to live up to my potential. Stretch. Push me to go further. Hold me accountable. Insist I take responsibility for my actions. Reflect on failures. Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide Support</strong></td>
<td>Navigate. Guide me through hard situations and systems.</td>
<td><strong>Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.</strong> Navigate. Guide me through hard situations and systems. Empower. Build my confidence to take charge of my life. Advocate. Stand up for me when I need it. Set boundaries. Put in place limits that keep me on track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Share Power</strong></td>
<td>Respect me. Take me seriously and treat me fairly.</td>
<td><strong>Treat me with respect and give me a say.</strong> Respect me. Take me seriously and treat me fairly. Include me. Involve me in decisions that affect me. Collaborate. Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. Let me lead. Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expand Possibilities</strong></td>
<td>Inspire. Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.</td>
<td><strong>Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.</strong> Inspire. Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. Broaden horizons. Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. Connect. Introduce me to more people who can help me develop and thrive.</td>
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My Developmental Relationships Map

Who are people in each setting with whom you have relationships that reflect the five elements of a developmental relationship? Jot their names or initials in the appropriate space in the diagram.