

# Conditions for Laying the Foundation for Talking with Youth about Healthy Relationships

Condition 1: Rapport and trust with the young person	
Why is this condition important?	How do I create the condition?
Build rapport and trust with a young person to ensure they feel heard, understood, and supported. Trust helps youth feel comfortable discussing healthy relationships. <sup>1</sup>	Trust and rapport are built over time. You can build trust and rapport when you 1) actively listen, 2) respond without judgment, and 3) show authenticity. You can help empower, advocate for, and guide youth through challenging situations in their relationships. <sup>2,3</sup>
Condition 2: A welcoming, private space	
Why is this condition important?	How do I create the condition?
A welcoming and private space can help youth feel comfortable talking about themselves and their romantic relationships. <sup>4,5</sup>	Reduce distractions that can cause anxiety (e.g., visual, auditory, and motion over-stimulation). <sup>6,7</sup> Create opportunities for youth-led individual or group sessions and for youth to express themselves creatively (e.g., through art or play). <sup>8,9</sup>
Condition 3: Intentionality in preparing for, engaging in, and following up with youth	
Why is this condition important?	How do I create the condition?
Be intentional in how you approach interactions with youth. Help youth have an honest and open dialogue. <sup>10</sup>	Ensure that time with youth is meaningful. Plan topics ahead of time but prioritize allowing youth to drive what is most important. <sup>11</sup> Work with youth to set an agenda, ask specific and open-ended questions, set goals, and provide resources and/or homework between interactions. <sup>12</sup>
Condition 4: Self-awareness of assumptions	
Why is this condition important?	How do I create the condition?
Self-awareness helps you understand your emotions, biases, strengths, and areas for growth in conversations with young people. <sup>13,14</sup>	Take steps to develop greater awareness of your own strengths, challenges, and areas for growth. Engage in ongoing professional development and learning (e.g., work-related professional development resources, case conferencing, and/or clinical supervision if available). <sup>15,16</sup>

### Condition 5: Knowledge of state-mandated reporting policies

Why is this condition important?	How do I create the condition?
Be clear with youth about what you legally must report to authorities (e.g., abuse) when disclosed. This ensures that youth feel comfortable having open and honest conversations.	Learn mandated reporting policies in your state. Have conversations about those policies with youth. <sup>17</sup>

### Condition 6: Awareness of cultural norms

Why is this condition important?	How do I create the condition?
Talk with youth about differences in cultural norms related to healthy relationships. Work with youth to navigate their own cultural beliefs and those of their current and future partner(s). <sup>18</sup>	Talk about differences in communication styles, gender norms, and views of healthy romantic relationships. For example, some cultures rely on verbal and nonverbal cues while others just focus on verbal cues. <sup>19</sup>



**Excerpted from:** Rosenberg, R., Naylor, K., Simone-Woods, N., Rust, K., Beckwith, S. (2024). *Crucial Conversations about Healthy Romantic Relationships: A Toolkit for Youth Supporting Professionals*. Child Trends.

**To access the full technical assistance tool, please scan the provided QR code or visit:** <https://activatecenter.org/resource/crucial-conversations-about-healthy-romantic-relationships>

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<sup>2</sup> National Council for Mental Wellbeing (2023). Getting candid: Framing the conversation around youth substance use prevention. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/getting-candid-framing-the-conversation-around-youth-substance-use-prevention/>

<sup>3</sup> Himelstein, S. (2016). *6 Tips for building authentic relationships with adolescents*. Center for Adolescent Studies. <https://centerforadolescentstudies.com/6-tips-for-building-authentic-relationships-with-adolescents/>

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization (2013). *Counselling for maternal and newborn health care: A handbook for building skills*. Geneva. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK304189/>

<sup>5</sup> Timor-Shlevin, S. & Krumer-Nevo, M. (2015). Partnership-based practice with young people: Relational dimensions of partnership in a therapeutic setting. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 24(5), 576-586. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12227>

<sup>6</sup> Anthony, K., & Watkins, N. (2007). The design of psychologist offices: A qualitative evaluation of environment-function fit. <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/25674/bitstreams/88365/data.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Healthy Teen Network (2024). Serenity Collection: Thrivology. <https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/thrivology/resources/serenity-collection/>

<sup>8</sup> Wilkerson, E., McAlister, S., Foster, L., & Perez, W. (n.d.) *5 Tips for creating culturally responsive and sustaining youth programs*. NYU Steinhardt: Metropolitan center for research on equity and the transformation of schools. <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/5-tips-creating-culturally-responsive-and-sustaining-youth-programs>.

<sup>9</sup> Positive Psychology (2020). 15 Art Therapy Activities & Ideas for Kids. <https://positivepsychology.com/art-therapy/>

<sup>10</sup> Fischer, J. A., Kelly, C. M., Kitchener, B. A., & Jorm, A. F. (2013). Development of guidelines for adults on how to communicate with adolescents about mental health problems and other sensitive topics: A Delphi study. *SAGE Open*, 3(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013516769>

<sup>11</sup> Mental Health First Aid. (2022). *Considerations when providing mental health first aid to an adolescent*. [https://www.mhfa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/MHFA\\_Considerations-when-providing-MHFA-to-an-adolescent-Guidelines.pdf](https://www.mhfa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/MHFA_Considerations-when-providing-MHFA-to-an-adolescent-Guidelines.pdf)

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<sup>12</sup> Roby, S., Eddins, K. Welch, E., Knab, J. Asheer, S. and Baumgartner, S. (2022) *Strengthening facilitation skills: A training manual for facilitators working with youth*. (OPRE Report No. 2022-158). Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/Strengthening-Facilitation-Skills-Trainer-Guide.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> DiVirgilio, N. (2018). *Therapist, know thyself: Self-reflective practice through autoethnography*. *Social Work Master's Clinical Research Papers*. 837. [https://ir.stthomas.edu/ssw\\_mstrp/837](https://ir.stthomas.edu/ssw_mstrp/837)

<sup>14</sup> Stewart, D. (2024). *Why is self-awareness in social work important?* Alliant International University. <https://www.alliant.edu/blog/self-awareness-in-social-work>

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<sup>18</sup> Society for Psychotherapy. (n.d.). *Cultural influences and heteronormativity on experiences in romantic relationships*.

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