The Dibble Institute®
Resources for Teaching Relationship Skills

Positive Youth Development Framework	Emerging Relationships
Skill Building. Develop soft and life skills through skill building activities within individual, family, peer and community settings.	The purpose of _Emerging Relationships_ is to empower youth with knowledge and skills to promote healthy individual growth and strong relationships. The learning objectives in the curriculum are associated with **thriving** young people. Specifically, after participating in this program, students will be able to: • Have **Character**: Practice self-regulation skills through intentional goal-setting and decision-making. • Be **Caring**: Demonstrate emotional competencies such as emotional regulation and empathy that promote healthy relationships and avoid risk-taking. • Feel **Confident**: Enhance feelings of self-worth in various domains of development. • Be **Connected**: Identify healthy/unhealthy traits in relationships and develop adult—youth mentorship. • Feel **Competent**: Develop boundary-setting skills for improved efficacy in avoiding common youth risk-taking behaviors. • Make a **Contribution**: Apply knowledge and skills about healthy relationships to advocate for personal and relational well-being among peers.

Youth engagement and contribution. Allow youth engagement to take different shapes. This can include youth expression, youth involvement in community service and creating opportunities for youth decision-making at various levels of government. This can also include programs that provide structure for youth contribution or that support youth leadership.	Lesson 6, **I am a Leader,** emphasizes that every individual has the potential to lead. Students will explore leadership in an interpersonal context and the qualities of leaders whose influence has led to a positive, community-level impact. Students will apply what they have learned in the program to make a positive contribution to their school community by developing and sharing positive messages promoting wellness and healthy relationships. Student engagement in their school community contributes to feelings of empowerment and belonging and promotes healthy in-school relationships. Actively engaging in the community with the support and guidance of adults, such as through service projects and volunteering, allows youth to grow and demonstrate leadership skills[3,5]. While service projects may vary, youth are encouraged to draw an important connection between leadership and the act of making a positive contribution to the greater good of the community by applying what they have learned in *Emerging Relationships*. Specifically, by engaging positively in their school community, a sense of belonging and connection tends to increase, and youth are more likely to buy into school-related values and goals.
Healthy relationships and bonding. Identify and link youth to positive adult role models, mentors, coaches, teachers, health care providers and community leaders. Ideally, youth have at least one caring and consistent adult in their lives. Healthy peer relationships are also particularly important to youth.	Each lesson in the *Emerging Relationship* curriculum, students have an opportunity to later connect with a person they look up to or their "Champion." This Champion Connection is based on research showing that having a trusted adult in their lives makes a big difference for adolescent resiliency. In addition, the *Emerging Relationships* program relies on a positive classroom climate and teacher-student connections. As the instructor of this program, your interactions with students will model healthy relationship skills and self-regulation. Good self-regulation involves having control of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. A benefit of self-regulation is the ability to focus on long-term goals, manage stress and strong emotions, and behave in ways aligned with our intentions. Adults who interact with youth (parents, teachers, coaches, etc.) have an opportunity to model self-regulation and support youth in developing these skills. This is referred to as co-regulation and has recently become an important aspect of healthy relationship education programs for youth.

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Belonging and membership. Foster activities where youth feel included regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, or other factors. Identify activities that provide positive sense of belonging (schools, sports, community service, faith-based youth group, etc.)	The *Emerging Relationships* program is rooted in the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework. This framework is a strength-based, optimistic view of adolescent development that serves as a foundation for effective youth prevention programs (e.g., 4-H, Teen Outreach Program). Programs using this empowering approach foster adolescents' potential as key contributors to our society now and in their future. The learning objectives in the curriculum are associated with **thriving** young people. Specifically, after participating in this program, students will be able to: • Have **Character**: Practice self-regulation skills through intentional goal-setting and decision-making. • Be **Caring**: Demonstrate emotional competencies such as emotional regulation and empathy that promote healthy relationships and avoid risk-taking. • Feel **Confident**: Enhance feelings of self-worth in various domains of development. • Be **Connected**: Identify healthy/unhealthy traits in relationships and develop adult—youth mentorship. • Feel **Competent**: Develop boundary-setting skills for improved efficacy in avoiding common youth risk-taking behaviors. • Make a **Contribution**: Apply knowledge and skills about healthy relationships to advocate for personal and relational well-being among peers.

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Positive norms, expectations, and perceptions. Have clear and consistent norms and expectations about health, relationships, and forms of engagement that provide youth an increasing amount of responsibility and independence and allow youth to grow and take on new roles.	According to self-determination theory, individuals have three important psychological needs: **competence, autonomy, and relatedness**. When these needs are met, young people have greater motivation, productivity, and well-being. By teaching youth competent decision-making, tools for building positive relationships, and individual character building, we aim to strengthen their overall wellness. *Emerging Relationships* helps them develop confidence and self-efficacy in navigating relationships and develop a sense of autonomy in their decisions and leadership abilities. *Emerging Relationships* curriculum built self-regulation into each lesson by encouraging teacher/facilitator modeling of self-regulation, a **"Power Pause"** activity to practice emotional regulation, and a focus on goal setting and intentionality. Research shows that self-regulation is a skill that can be improved with practice. Early adolescence is a prime window of opportunity to learn these skills.

Safe Space. Create safe spaces that are tailored to the needs of youth-including physical infrastructure as well as emotional safety. Space can be defined in a variety of ways, including virtual. Many communities lack any space for youth to convene. Thus, communities must be committed to providing youth with safe spaces to practice, engage, and learn creatively and collaboratively. An emotionally safe space is critical to learning.	*Emerging Relationships* is designed to be taught on **non-consecutive** days. This program has a key element that focuses on adult-youth connection called "Champion Connection". Teaching the lessons every other day, for example, allows youth time to connect with their trusted adult.
	
	Teachers are encouraged to use strategies for co-regulation in the classroom to ensure a safe learning environment for all. These strategies are:
	
	1. **Build rapport**
	   • Welcome students to classroom & interact before class.
	   • Call students by name (use name cards).
	   • Share some appropriate personal examples.
	   • Get to know students' interests (name cards can show interests).

	2. Show enthusiasm about content and students • Tell students why content matters. • Use non-verbal communication to show excitement (e.g., body language and tone of voice). **3. Co-create and maintain class expectations** • Co-create agreed-upon ways to have a supportive, respectful classroom • Regularly remind students of expectations. • Point out when expectations are not being met. • Acknowledge if you did not meet expectations **4. Create a safe, supportive classroom climate** • Be trauma-informed and inclusive. • Reflect on the characteristics of a good classroom climate and consider what might need improvement. Consider what you do well to foster a safe space for students. • Reflect on your pre-conceived expectations about your students and how this program might be received. Your beliefs and students' beliefs about themselves affect learning outcomes. **5. Model emotional competence** • Respond to students with empathy, validation, and enthusiasm. ("I'm so sorry that happened to you," or "I get it, it can be really tough..." or "I'm so glad you shared that") • Throughout the modules, teachers will be prompted to create their own examples that correspond with the content. For instance, when teaching about healthy relationships, you'll briefly describe a relationship that you have that is healthy and happy. • Choose examples that are not too personal or anything that you would be uncomfortable with if your students knew that about you. Keep your personal examples very brief (30-60 seconds).

	• You will notice that there are instances in which examples are provided. The content in the examples provided align with the topics covered in the lesson. You may create your own similar example, or use the example provided as if it is your own. *Emerging Relationships* curriculum built self-regulation into each lesson by encouraging teacher/facilitator modeling of self-regulation, a **"Power Pause"** activity to practice emotional regulation, and a focus on goal setting and intentionality. Research shows that self-regulation is a skill that can be improved with practice. Early adolescence is a prime window of opportunity to learn these skills. Additionally, *Emerging Relationships*, provides student journals for personal use and are meant to be saved by participants to reinforce the concepts and provide information to connect with other services in their community.
Access to age appropriate and youth friendly services; integration among services. Make information available to youth and families, connection and integrating health and social services so there is a continuum of care and support at a community level.	Course facilitators are encouraged to connect teens with resources for violence prevention, reporting, medical assistance, and more. Instructor slides can be updated with local guides and community resources. Student journals are for personal use and are meant to be saved by participants to reinforce the concepts and provide information to connect with other services in their community. Each lesson in the *Emerging Relationship* curriculum, students have an opportunity to later connect with a person they look up to or their "Champion." This Champion Connection is based on research showing that having a trusted adult in their lives makes a big difference for adolescent resiliency.