

Importance of Trusted Adults in Adolescent Development

Developmental research shows that it's important for our children to have one or more adults that they can rely on and trust. Having trusted adults in their lives, will increase the likelihood that our children will thrive and become successful, contributing adults. In most cases, parents are the first and most important trusted adults in the lives of their children, but other important adults like relatives, neighbors, teachers, coaches, religious leaders and parents of friends have great value in the healthy development of our children.

Other caring adults can provide perspective and offer guidance and support for adolescents at times when parents may not be available. Another trusted adult can offer expertise or advice when parents may not be able or qualified. They can encourage and help to develop a sense of connectedness for our adolescents. Having trusted and caring adults in their lives can contribute to adolescents' self esteem, confidence and positive behavioral reactions. These skills of resilience strengthen young people in ways that increase the likelihood that they will make positive, healthy choices.

February Prevention Principle

Developmental research shows that having one or more caring adults in a child's life increases the likelihood that they will flourish, and become productive adults themselves. In many cases, these caring adults are the child's parents, but other relatives, neighbors, friends of parents, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and others can play this role.

A [recent study](#) on the importance of caring adults found that adolescents with formal or informal "mentor-like" relationships with adults other than their parents are **LESS LIKELY** to:

- * be involved in bullying situations
- * be depressed

The same study, found that adolescents with these positive adult relationships are **MORE LIKELY** to:

- * complete tasks they start
- * deal with challenges calmly
- * Volunteer
- * Participate in physical activities
- * Be involved with extra-curricular activities
- * Be more engaged at school
- * Talk with their parents about "things that really matter"

Conversations that Count

Often, our children find themselves in situations where they can develop these relationships naturally (i.e. teachers at school, coaches from sports team, religious leaders at their church). There may be times when we need to be more intentional in helping our children find ways to connect with other caring adults in a positive way. We can use our own experiences with mentors in our lives to help guide our children. This month's [PowerTalk for families](#), Trusted Adults are Valuable, will give your child the opportunity to interview you about your experiences and open the door for that conversation to take place.

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