

How to Promote Healthy Relationships in the Classroom

Essentials of Healthy Teacher-Student Relationships

- 1. Teacher-student relationships are critical**
 - As educators, you have an incredible capacity to help students' healthy social and cognitive development through your relationships with them
- 2. All relationships are interconnected**
 - Students learn about healthy relationships through their individual relationships with their teacher, but also through their observation of how teachers interact with their colleagues and how teachers interact with all students
 - Not only does this impact the student's individual development, but it also influences the group dynamics within the classroom and how students interact with each other
- 3. Teacher-Student relationships involve a power imbalance**
 - It is crucial for teachers to recognize the power they have in their relationships with students and to use it to empower students and promote student well-being
- 4. Healthy student-teacher relationships involve:**
 - Respect
 - Caring
 - Safety
 - Trust
 - Autonomy and Boundaries
 - Communication
 - Fun

Strategies for Promoting Healthy Relationships in the Classroom

- 1. Role Model** by intentionally acting and behaving in ways that you want your students to behave
 - What can I model?
 - Respect, warmth, empathy, patience, cooperation, sharing, validating, complimenting
- 2. Observe** by explicitly watching how students are doing in the classroom, how they are interacting with each other, and how the climate of the classroom is
 - Ideas of what to observe:
 - For individual students:
 - Are academic demands too much? Too little?
 - Are any students having social challenges?
 - Are there any events that seem to be related to a student's emotional outbursts (e.g., does a student have a tantrum every time the classroom is noisy?)
 - Group dynamics:
 - Are there social hierarchies in the classroom?
 - Is it a competitive or cooperative atmosphere?



3. **Reflect** by taking time to think about one's own practices and reactions
 - Ideas of what to reflect on:
 - Reactions to individual students (e.g., are there students that you are, inadvertently, reacting to with frustration?)
 - Fairness
 - How students see you
 - Your cultural identity and any biases you might have
4. **Respond in the moment** by making sure to consistently respond to both negative (disrespectful language, hurtful behaviours) and positive (openness, inclusion, helpfulness) remarks and behaviours in the moment
 - For example:
 - Respond to a homophobic comment in the moment by calling out its inappropriateness
 - Praise a student for being open to working with a new partner in order to reinforce inclusion and flexibility
5. **Scaffold/Coach** by recognizing a student's current skill level and providing support to the student so that they can function at a higher level
 - What skills can I scaffold?
 - Emotion and behaviour regulation; Empathy and perspective taking; Appreciation of differences and diversity; Sense of fairness and justice; Appreciation of rights and responsibilities; Using one's power positively; Positive problem solving; Moral re-engagement
 - How can I do this?
 - For example, if a student often dominates the conversation in group work, you can provide scaffolding by sitting with this student's group during a group assignment and modelling appreciating and making space for others' input
6. **Use social architecture** by taking responsibility for structuring the classroom and activities
 - What does this help with?
 - All students feeling safe, included, and accepted
 - Vulnerable students being protected
 - Reducing negative peer interactions
 - How can I do this?
 - Assign seating and assign partners, groups, and teams for activities
 - Re-shuffle both often
 - Plan structured activities, clubs, or mentoring for unstructured time (e.g., recess)
6. **Champion** by ensuring that all students feel recognized and appreciated within your classroom
 - How can I do this?
 - Make sure there are a variety of ways that students can be recognized beyond the traditional ways
 - For example, recognize students for kindness, being a great listener, uniqueness, thinking outside of the box etc.