The Steve Fund

FAMILY CORNER

GUIDE: Thrive Together

Safe & Seen: Building Secure and Trusting Relationships

Building secure and trusting relationships starts at home. The way you connect, communicate, and show up in relationships teaches your young person about healthy connection. One of the most potent ways to help a young person in your life to develop strong, positive bonds with others is by modeling these practices yourself.

Help your young person build healthy relationships

4 tips for supporting your young person to thrive

1. Practice vulnerability & emotional safety

Encourage your young person to express their feelings and emotions without applying judgment. Create a safe space to talk and validate their feelings. Practice vulnerability with your young person by talking openly and honestly about your own feelings if you face a challenge.

Try one of these conversation starters:

- "Lately, I have been feeling really sad because…"
- "I have been feeling overwhelmed or stressed because…"
- "I have been acting distant or wanting to be left alone because…"
- "I have been feeling on edge or irritated by things because…"
- "I have been feeling lonely because…"
- "I have been feeling unheard or misunderstood because…"

2. Communicate needs and boundaries

Help your young person name their needs and boundaries in a relationship. Start by listing some of yours and then ask them about theirs. Here are a few examples to try as a family as you create ways to express your needs and boundaries:

- **With a partner:** "When I share that I'm feeling hurt because of something you did, I need you to validate what I am saying, take accountability, and work with me to solve this issue."

- **With a friend:** "I love spending time together, but I'm feeling overwhelmed right now. I need to take a break from social plans this weekend to rest."
- **With a child:** "I'm feeling frustrated right now, and I need a few minutes to cool down. I'll come back and we'll talk about it."
- **With a peer or colleague:** "I want to be helpful, but I'm at capacity with my workload. I won't be able to take on anything extra right now. Can we find another solution together?
- **With a teacher or professor:** "I'm committed to doing my best in this class, but I'm struggling with the pace of the assignments. Is there a way I could get additional support or resources?"

3. Be consistent and trustworthy

As a caregiver, being consistent in your relationship with your young person helps them understand what a positive and trusting relationship can look like. Where do you shine, and where can you grow in being consistent in your relationship with your young person? What about their ability to grow in their relationship with you or others?

What does consistency look like?

- Following through on your commitments
- Communicating openly and regularly
- Being emotionally available and responsive
- Investing time and energy in the relationship
- Demonstrating trustworthiness
- Adapting to challenges
- Making efforts to grow individually and together
- Respecting boundaries
- Being present when needed

4. Balance independence and interdependence

It's important for your young person to have their own sense of identity separate from their relationships while also having a healthy balance of mutual reliance and support from others. This includes the relationship between you and your young person.

Reflection exercise

Take a moment to reflect on how you and your young person balance independence and connection with these questions:

- What hobbies, interests, or personal goals do you enjoy on your own? Which ones do you share or enjoy with others?
- What activities do you each do separately that help you grow as individuals? Are there meaningful activities you could do together to strengthen your bond?
- What does your personal self-care look like? Are you making time to take care of your own well-being?
- How do you express your needs and set boundaries in your relationships? Are you doing this clearly and respectfully?
- In what areas of your life could you use more support? Where can you support yourself more?

Explore the Thrive Together Mini Workbook
Help your young person build supportive, healthy relationships. This workbook is part of ***Built to Thrive***, an interactive workbook created by The Steve Fund.
Explore Built to Thrive now!

Visit SteveFund.org/Family-Corner for resources and events designed to support you and your family.

