

7 Things Every Youth Ministry Should Know about Relationships



Insights for . . .

Youth Leaders • Mentors • Coaches
Teachers • Discussion Group Leaders
Volunteers • Pastors • Counselors

7 Things Every Youth Ministry Should Know about Relationships

Relationship skills are essential for successful youth ministry!

A few definitions:

Relationship: A particular connection existing between people who have dealings with each other; a continuing attachment or association between individuals; a connection between an individual and a group.

Leadership: Guiding self and others to worthy destinations or achievements.

Synopsis:

1. Better relationships bring profound benefits for everyone involved in youth ministry, including young people, mentors, families, and communities.
2. Poor relationships contribute to costly consequences for young people, families, schools, churches and society.
3. Many people never learned basic principles for relationships.
4. Even though most people would agree that relationships are important in their lives, few will take the initiative to learn and apply principles for better relationships.
5. There are Very Important Persons (VIPs) in each person's sphere of influence. Each VIP has *their own* sphere of influence, and thus the benefits of better relationships can be multiplied to many people.
6. Wise youth ministry leaders take positive steps to build and maintain excellent personal relationships, and they seek to help others do the same.
7. Positive influences toward good relationships need to be ongoing and consistent.



1. Better relationships bring profound benefits for everyone involved in youth ministry, including young people, mentors, families, and communities.

Better relationships . . .

- Promote character development of all involved
- Decrease stress in working together
- Increase fulfillment and satisfaction
- Build stronger families and friendships
- Help build better neighborhoods and communities
- Make a positive difference in the culture

Better relationships also help your ministry . . .

- Develop an excellent community
- Attract dedicated, values-oriented staff and volunteers
- Decrease staff and volunteer turnover
- Increase quality of services to those served
- Increase teamwork
- Make greater progress on vision, mission and goals
- Create goodwill among donors and prospective donors
- Encourage other ministries to refer people to you who need your services



Whatever else we do to help youth, if we fail to help them develop good relational skills, everything else we do may be ineffective or lost.

2. Poor relationships contribute to costly consequences for young people, families, schools, churches and society.

Some costly consequences of poor relationships . . .

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Family dysfunction | • Job stress & turnover |
| • Separation & divorce | • Drugs |
| • Hatred & bullying | • Destructive behavior |
| • Estrangement | • Resistance to authority |
| • Crime and violence | • Wasted time & resources |
| • Learning problems | |



An excellent culture helps attract and keep excellent staff members and volunteers.

3. Many people never learned basic principles for relationships.

Families, schools, communities and even churches often fail to train in the basic values and lifeskills that lead to better relationships.

Leaders should not be surprised that there are so many poor relationships and consequences today. Many leaders are working with young people, staff members, volunteers, parents and others who have been in environments in which they never learned values and lifeskills for good relationships. Furthermore, the media and much of today's culture persistently portray poor values, poor lifeskills and poor relationships.

For example: In the past we took for granted a basic principle like *respect*. Today, many people don't even know what *respect* means, why it's so important, or how to practice it. Some people seem to know more about *disrespect* than they know about *respect*.

4. Even though most people would agree that relationships are important in their lives, few will take the initiative to learn and apply principles for better relationships.

Leadership is needed. Many people need motivation and direction to learn and practice values and lifeskills. They may not realize the benefits for themselves and for people around them. The values-oriented leader takes the initiative to promote and provide relationship training, resulting in valuable personal benefits that also benefit the ministry.

A wise youth leader develops and promotes quality relationships *with* and *among* people and helps others to do the same.

*The quality of a person's relationships reflects the quality of a person's life.
A person may have good physical health and wealth,
but if relationships are poor, life is not healthy or rich.*

5. There are Very Important Persons (VIPs) in each person's sphere of influence. Each VIP has *their own* sphere of influence, and thus the benefits of better relationships can be multiplied to many people.

Very Important Persons . . .

Young People – *Those who benefit from your ministry's services.*

- Current and former ministry participants
- Families of young people you serve

Staff, Associates & Others – *The people who provide time, talent, effort and resources to continue in your ministry.*

- Staff & Volunteers
- Families of staff & volunteers (and, of course, your own family)
- Churches, youth ministries and other entities who refer people to you
- Suppliers & Outside resources



Joe Girard's "Rule of 250"

Each person you meet knows, on average, 250 other people – some of whom may need your services.

Joe Girard has been called the "world's greatest salesperson." He developed a simple "Rule of 250" that he used very successfully in developing favorable relationships and getting profitable referrals.

A few calculations demonstrate this concept . . .

If you have 250 people in your own sphere of relationships, you potentially are able to relate with and influence 250 people directly.

However, if *each* of the 250 people in your sphere has 250 people in *their* spheres, you have the potential to have an indirect influence upon more than 62,000 people!*

* Many young people have fewer than 250 in their spheres, but the principle of multiplied influence still holds.

6. Wise youth ministry leaders take positive steps to build and maintain excellent personal relationships, and they seek to help others do the same.

They understand that . . .

- Relational lifeskills are vital for growth of young people and will benefit each person and those around them all through life.
- It's easy to be too busy with more "important" things, such as putting out "fires."
- Many of those "fires" are the result of, or are fueled by, poor relationships.
- The need to pay attention to the time-related dimensions of relationships (see box at right).
- It is wrong to assume that people *know, remember and will practice* the basic principles of healthy relationships without leadership direction and encouragement.
- That they themselves may need to develop better relationships.
- People can change.



"Some pessimists would say that no one changes, that the leopard never changes his spots. But in fact everyone is changing every day, either for better or for worse . . . of course they change, and we can influence, to some extent at least, how they change."

– Dr. Alan Loy McGinnis

- That it's a myth that some people are just "lucky" at relationships. The truth is that most people who have good relationships practice proven values and lifeskills for quality relationships.

Time-related Dimensions of Relationships

Present Dimension

Wise leaders never forget the great importance of VIPs with whom they are currently involved. However, some leaders, anxious to *add* people to the "present" dimension, forget how important it is to maintain favorable relationships with people who are *already in* the "present" dimension.

Prospective Dimension

These are prospective youth group members, staff members, parents, volunteers, donors and others. Because of attrition in the "present" dimension, people must be added from this dimension. Furthermore, to increase the number of people in the "present" dimension requires adding even more people from this dimension. Thus, both maintenance and growth of people in the "present" dimension comes from this "prospective" dimension.

Past Dimension

People in this dimension are frequently neglected. Some "forward-thinking" leaders will ignore or even disrespect past members of the various VIP groups. While "past" members have the potential to move back into the "present," perhaps of even greater significance is the fact that *"past" members of VIP groups may have direct or indirect influence upon people who are in the "present" and "prospective" dimensions.*

7. Positive influences toward good relationships need to be ongoing and consistent.

Some reasons for ongoing positive influences:

- Negative influences abound in our society.
- Repetition impresses upon people the importance of what is being repeated.
- Repetition helps people learn.
- People forget. Even after learning, we all need reminders.
- Consistent positive influences help people make good values part of their thinking so that good values become part of their lives.

"People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed."

– Samuel Johnson

Note: the quote above was cited and affirmed by another great thinker and professor, C.S. Lewis

Wise youth leaders make positive influences abundant.



Wise leaders . . .

. . . promote quality interpersonal relationships
with and among people in their spheres of influence!

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The 12 Seeds Acrostic is shown above, with a brief definition for each seed. Also, the human need each seed helps fill is in *italics*.



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