

The Missing Link – Relationship Skills Education by Kay Reed

Today, we see students who lack social and emotional intelligence.

We want to create a positive future for these students.

Lack of social skills hinders young people's success in our programs and beyond.

We want to help students develop pro-social behaviors.

Help teens learn healthy, romantic relationship skills.

1. Relationship skills programs increase positive behaviors.
 - a. Relationship skills programs increase social competence (and maybe even test scores!)
 - i. Developing healthy romantic relationship skills applies to all students.
 - ii. Learning empathy and caring is a developmental task of young adults.
 - iii. Developing pro-social behaviors is a key objective of after school programs.
 - b. Relationship skills increase students' abilities to resist sexual pressures and delay sexual activity.
 - i. Teens confuse love, lust, and infatuation.
 - ii. Sex is typically in the context of a relationship.
 - iii. Help youth pause and reflect on the consequences of various actions.
 - c. Relationship skills programs improve parent teen communications.
 - i. Close, supportive families are the bronze bullets in pregnancy prevention.
 - ii. According to teens, their parents have the most influence on their relationships.
 - iii. Improving staff student relationships is a key need of after school programs.
2. Relationship skills programs reduce risky behaviors.
 - a. Teens decrease the use of verbally aggressive and violent tactics in interpersonal conflicts.
 - i. Researchers at Auburn University are evaluating relationship skills programs as a dating violence intervention.
 - ii. All schools are required to have a violence prevention plan.
 - iii. Creating a harmonious environment is key to after school program success.
 - b. Teen romantic love may discourage negative outcomes including involvement in crime.
 - i. A positive romantic relationship creates positive attachments in adolescents.
 - ii. Many, if not most teens, are (or want to be) in a romantic relationship.

- iii. Decreasing bullying behaviors is a priority in most schools.
 - c. Addressing the quality of a teen couple's relations can prevent dysfunctional parenting practices (i.e. child abuse).
 - i. Most child abuse occurs in co-habiting relationships.
 - ii. All parents seek the best for their children.
 - iii. One of five teens say they don't know anyone in a healthy relationship.
3. Teens both need and want to learn relationship skills.
- a. First comes education, and then comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby....
 - i. The "Success Sequence" teaches the order of life events that results in better outcomes.
 - ii. Having a child as a teenager has risks for mom and baby.
 - iii. Children are disadvantaged when not living with their own two married parents.
 - b. What do teens need to learn to navigate their love lives?
 - i. Self-Efficacy – Empathy – Caring – Respect
 - ii. How healthy relationships grow and develop
 - iii. Communications - Conflict Resolution – Commitment
 - c. Relationship skills programs are easy to implement.
 - i. Teens want to learn about their love lives.
 - ii. Instruction can take place wherever teens gather.
 - iii. Any person who works with teens can teach relationship skills.