

Tip Sheet

V.I.T.A.L. Steps Applied to Case Practice

Focus: Supporting Healthy Relationships

Best Practice Summary: Adolescence is a time to explore and develop emotional and social competence across relationships. Healthy relationships are an important part of adolescent development. These relationships share certain characteristics that youth should be taught to expect. This includes mutual respect for boundaries. Key aspects of a healthy relationship include respect and communications. Healthy relationships are marked by honesty, physical safety, comfort, respectfulness, independence, and humor. Aspects of unhealthy relationships include disrespect, intimidation, dishonesty, and abuse. Physical violence and sexual dating violence are not uncommon in adolescent relationships. Research in neuroscience demonstrates that adolescents may have limitations to their capacity for consequential thought and ability to imagine alternative outcomes. Adolescence can prepare for future relationships by learning healthy skills such as negotiation, conflict resolution, and setting healthy boundaries. Learning to develop healthy relationships is a lifelong process influenced by a variety of factors, including family, social norms, media exposure, peers and school. Healthy relationships require communication and can rely on emotional self-regulation, social confidence, and empathy.

Citations: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Choose respect community action kit: Helping preteens and teens build healthy relationships. Atlanta, GA: CDC: 2005.

Futures Without Violence. 10 Tips on talking about healthy relationships with teens. San Francisco, CA: Futures Without Violence: 2014.

Goals for the Activity and Conversation: Help youth to strengthen relationship skills.

V.I.T.A.L. Values and/or Essential Practice Principles in Action:

What values and principles are applied in preparation for meeting or conversation with youth and what is applied during the meeting?

In preparation: Safety and security, Understanding youth's relationships.

During meetings: Relationships, strengthening self-confidence.

Specific suggestions include:

Encourage honest and thoughtful reflection about peer and romantic relationships.

Ask if relationships involve trust, supports, fairness, equality.

Ask if there is good communication.

Ask about warning signs such as verbal insults, physical violence, emotional abuse, excessive criticism.

Ask if the young adult engages in destructive behavior with a peer, or romantic partner.

Assess for bullying, fear, or intimidation.

Discuss the importance of consent as part of a healthy relationship.

Discuss opportunities to seek out and form new relationships.

Ask if a partner is willing to compromise, respects the other person's feelings, accepts "no."

Ask if the partner is controlling (e.g., trying to control clothing or activities).

Seek RRG and IPV expert consultation when necessary.

Suggested CQI Measures

Does the team assess the nature and quality of the youth's relationships?

Are opportunities provided to seek out and form new relationships?

Were appropriate consults secured?

For Coaching and Support of Skill Development in Supervision: Consider core practice principles (Engage & Exchange Information, Assess & Understand Strengths, Fortify & Support, Reflect & Adjust). Has the supervisor set a safe and secure environment for this discussion?

Level of Mastery Demonstrated: Consider the level of mastery demonstrated by staff on this task.

Foundational: The team member is at an early stage of core practice and skill acquisition. The team member is supported in learning the skills. The team member has an opportunity to develop skills. Coaching agendas may target specific skills for development. The skills are demonstrated and actively coached by team leaders.

Rising: The team member occasionally applies the practices and skills independently. Coaching agendas focus on generalizing skills. The team member demonstrates increasing understanding of the practices. Skills are demonstrated and coached by team leaders.

Secure: The team member consistently applies skills independently to a wide range of settings and aspires to apply knowledge and understanding. There is a range of evidence that shows a deeper understanding of concepts and that skills are sustained over time.