

## A Guide to Relationships in a Time of Recovery

Connection is an essential component of emotional well-being. Our youth need support, empathy, and companionship from others to feel validated in their struggles. Research consistently shows that having a healthy support system can help reduce aversive mental health symptoms and promote higher self-esteem.

Staying connected during COVID-19 may feel challenging, but it's essential to prioritize these relationships. As a loved one, consider practicing the following guidelines to help support the youth in your life. Focus on implementing as many of them as you can.

### Show Compassion

- Ask them how they are really doing and listen without judgment.
- Call or send a message letting them know how much they mean to you.
- Acknowledge their strengths and validate their honesty.
- Praise them when you observe them taking care of themselves.
- Share your concerns about their well-being if you observe risky behaviors.

### Set Healthy Boundaries

- Outline your boundaries regarding school work and chores. Firmly (but lovingly) hold them accountable for following your expectations.
- Openly explore challenges that could prevent them from meeting your expectations.
- Encourage them to set reasonable goals for themselves during this time.
- Praise them for asking for help or reaching out for support.
- Reassess boundaries that may not be in their best interest.

### Promote Autonomy

- Encourage them to problem-solve or complete practical tasks on their own.
- Ask for feedback about your performance and integrate it appropriately.
- Offer choices as often as possible and be willing to accept the choices they make.
- Encourage leadership and reinforce critical thinking efforts.
- Ask them which activities they would like to try without assistance.

### Embrace Growth

- Discuss controversial issues and ask them their thoughts and feelings about the topic.
- Encourage activism and involvement with local policies.
- Share educational material that may inspire them to think differently or critically.
- Learn about their unique interests and preferences and ask how you can get involved.
- Review setbacks with them and reframe these challenges as a necessary part of growth.