

Messaging Healthy Youth Development

Talk about:

- Adolescence as a critical period of discovery and opportunity.
- The social, emotional, and identity development happening during adolescence.
- Opportunities for adults to support discovery-based learning and positive outcomes.
- Adolescents need positive interactions with peers to learn how to make good decisions and build resilience.
- How we can use our systems/programs/ resources to support adolescents' discovery-based learning.
- Values like opportunity for all, collective responsibility, and the role of environments in youth development.
- What equity and equitable solutions might look like in your jurisdiction.
- Data within a broad narrative (how systems and structures perpetuate racism) to show why inequities persist.
- The stories young people tell about themselves.
- Supporting parents in supporting their children.
- "We/our," the future
- Examples of youth civic engagement, service and activism, and how that improves our collective well-being.
- Opportunities to support young people in a crucial developmental stage as they try on new roles, explore the limits of

their environment, and form their values and identity.

Instead of:

- Adolescence as a vulnerable, fearful time of deficits-based risky behavior.
- Brain development as solely cognitive (reinforcing deficits-based thinking like "underdeveloped prefrontal cortex.")
- Adults' role = shield young people from the dangerous world around them and bad outcomes.
- Adolescents are vulnerable to peer pressure, are problems to be solved, pathologies to be managed, etc.
- How we must use our systems/programs/ resources to prevent adolescents from making risky decisions.
- Holding individual adolescents responsible for their environment's lack of opportunities.
- Naming disparities without naming their causes.
- Talking first about who racism happens to, or charging young people of color to battle racist, adult-led systems.
- The data describing "kids these days."
- Telling parents what to do (and assuming they have deficits).
- "They/them," the status quo.
- Examples of risk and negative behaviors perpetuated about young people (in society, in the media).
- Criticizing young people for testing boundaries and taking risks ("think

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they're invincible," "engage in risky behavior").

Examples

(Adapt these phrases to increase support for CSE, mental health programs, TPP, sexual health, partnerships with SBHCs, etc.)

- "Adolescence is about unearthing new experiences and making sense of them."
- "When young people have safe opportunities to test new ideas and experiences, they develop the skills they need to become contributing adults."
- "One impact of the history of racial segregation is that schools serving communities of color tend to have fewer resources. This is one reason why adolescents of color experience lower high school graduation rates than their white peers."
- "Supporting adolescents leads to healthier and more connected communities."
- "Middle school is a laboratory of social learning, where young people can experiment with relationships, roles, and behaviors to understand who they are and where they fit in."
- "During adolescence, we explore the world outside of our family in new ways."
- "The changes that occur between puberty and the mid-20s create a crucial period of intense learning about who we are and who we want to be."
- "Supporting strong relationships with teachers is one way to increase the high school graduation rate and build a stronger workforce."

This work-in-progress is adapted from five Frameworks Institute resources: "What to Do: What the public thinks and what to do about it," "The Six Strategies for Framing Adolescent Development," "Adolescent Toolkit Dos and Don'ts," "Framing Racial Equity in Adolescence," "The Discovery Metaphor Card," and "The Core Story of Adolescence."