

Reaching Teens: Strength-based, Trauma-sensitive, Resilience-building Communication Strategies Rooted in Positive Development

The American Academy of Pediatrics

Reaching Teens is about supporting youth serving professionals to be the kind of adults young people deserve in their lives. **It is ideal for virtual learning.**

Reaching teens is:

- A comprehensive toolkit that allows youth-serving professionals to **APPLY** the principles found in three theoretical frameworks:
 - Positive Youth Development
 - Resilience
 - Trauma-Sensitive Care
- Evidence-informed and theoretically-driven
- Infused with diverse expert multidisciplinary experience and the views of youth from many cultural and socio-demographic backgrounds.
- Committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a central element of all strategies.
 - A multimedia tool kit that uses written chapters, hundreds of videos, and personal reflection and group learning discussion processes to reinforce learning.
 - A toolkit that prepares youth-serving professionals to facilitate positive behavioral change.
 - A toolkit that prepares youth serving professionals to address a variety of behavioral risks and mental health issues from a strength-based perspective.
 - A continuing education product that is approved for up to 6 years of credit by the national organizations representing:
 - Social workers
 - Counselors
 - Nurses
 - Physicians
 - Physician Assistants
 - Health Educators
 - (Educators have SLE Objectives to facilitate the Creation of CEUs)
- A toolkit shown in an external process evaluation by University of North Texas Health Science Center to:
 - Fortify knowledge of trauma, resilience, and strengths-based approaches among human service providers.
 - Improve organizational environments, policies, and practices.
 - Improve system communication, collaboration, and coordination of care.

Reaching Teens is not:

- A diagnostic manual. For example, it does not tell you how to diagnose depression or anxiety, rather it tells you how to recognize these conditions and to use strength-based strategies to get youth to the services they deserve.
- A treatment manual. Following the same examples, It does not tell you how to treat depression or anxiety, rather it guides you how to interact with youth suffering from these conditions, without shame or stigma. It then guides you how to support them in their healing processes as you refer them to needed services with fully trained caregivers.
- A toolkit that understands your unique program or population. That is why the Group Learning and Discussion section is critical to driving home the lessons.
- A deep dive into all subject areas. Reaching Teens is designed to be comprehensive, but in some cases, it introduces strategies taught independently in multiple-day certification courses.
- An Additional Program. This is not one more program or initiative for youth-serving professionals to add to their overflowing plates. Rather, it is the plate. It does not replace any program or initiative, it serves as the foundational scaffolding to support other programs.

The Reaching Teens Evidence Base

Reaching Teens is evidence-informed and theoretically grounded. It uses the best of science where available. It leads the evidence through offering diverse expert opinions that inform you how to APPLY the theoretical evidence-based frameworks. For example, human connection surfaces repeatedly in research as the critical protective force in the lives of youth; therefore, there is irrefutable evidence that we *should* foster connection. The literature, however, does not adequately study HOW to connect with youth. Reaching Teens draws from expert adult and youth wisdom and experience to describe the HOWs of connection.

Reaching Teens draws from the lessons learned from intervention studies (such as motivational interviewing, resiliency skills building, structural interventions) that are at the core of trauma-sensitive, strengths-based practices. Reaching Teens is a compendium of these evidence-based practices. It is research-informed, as it moves beyond one evidence-based intervention to present what we call in prevention science ‘strategy bundles.’ It is neither pragmatic nor feasible to test every combination of these evidence-based practices reflected in Reaching Teens. Reaching Teens presents what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls ‘core intervention components’ based on several decades of youth development research. It is this ‘bundling’ of evidence-based interventions and best practices that is the magic sauce of Reaching Teens.

The 2nd Edition of Reaching Teens was released in June 2020

We have kept the print book at an (almost) reasonable length, by having certain key elements available only in an electronic version. Many users will choose to have only the electronic version; however, because many people prefer the look and feel of a book, we have printed a book that can be marked up, highlighted, and filled with sticky notes. People who have the print book *also* have full access to the electronic version which conveniently links directly to videos, references, and resources.

More importantly, the electronic version allows for tailored experiences for both individual learners and staff charged with creating professional development modules. Rather than needing to search through a 95-chapter toolkit, we have created streamlined navigational pathways. You choose your journey and the electronic version presents the chapters that meet your needs. For example:

- *Setting-specific portals* allow curated experiences for different practice settings assuring that the content most relevant to each setting is highlighted and that the reflection and group learning exercises use cases specific to each setting. The following settings have their own portals:
 - Educational Settings
 - Juvenile Justice
 - Drug and Alcohol Programs
 - Foster Care Professionals
 - Health Care Professionals
 - Sports and Physical Recreation Settings
 - Settings Serving Youth Enduring Homelessness, Unstable Housing, and Human Trafficking
- *Skill-based Unit portals* allow the learner to explore broad concepts. The electronic version automatically cohorts key chapters that support the broad skills you seek to strengthen. Currently, there are 16 “units.” Examples include:
 - The basics of effective communication with youth
 - Honoring diversity and practicing cultural humility
 - Instituting trauma-sensitive practices
 - Stress-management
 - Helping young people learn self-regulation
 - Self-care for youth-serving professionals

Visit the website below to test-ride these functionalities.

<http://www.aap.org/reachingteens2E>

The website offers an open access chapter critical for these times, “The Traumatic Impact of Racism and Discrimination on Young People and How to Talk About It.” Please disseminate it widely.