

Character Development: Competencies and Activities



INTRODUCTION

The Character Development Competency and Activities Cards are designed to be used by Program Directors with Youth Development Leaders in staff meetings or professional development sessions to help staff and volunteers plan for and reflect on their own Character Development and continually work to improve it.

These cards were designed to be used flexibly for planning and reflection. For example, you may want to use them during staff meetings and discuss with the group how the card applies to your program and how you can imagine it being used, or have staff act out a scenario that shows the card being used. You may also consider having staff use the cards and do a presentation, make a poster, or other activities that apply to your program.

For some of the cards there are resources and materials listed. For some materials, you may be able to use existing things from your program like check-in sheets or posters and writing materials. Other materials may be found online through simple web searches. We recommend reviewing the cards, and identifying resources needed, during meetings or planning for program activities.

Assess my own personal feelings, strengths, and limitations and how they impact my relationships with others.

Mindfulness Activities

Help Youth Development Leaders intentionally set aside time to practice silent or guided focused awareness. Youth Development Leaders think deeply about how they are feeling and assess the best ways to remain calm.

Resources/Materials: Breathing techniques, guided meditation, journals, writing tools

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders spending the first 5 minutes of meetings, trainings, or other professional development opportunities reflecting upon a time they felt happy, sad, angry, etc., how they handled their emotions in the moment, and what they would do differently looking back.
- Youth Development Leaders journaling at the end of each shift to reflect on and name their emotions from that day and how they handled them. Youth Development Leaders can identify who may have been affected (positively or negatively) by their emotions.

This might sound like...

- “Today my group was running behind on an activity which meant we weren’t going to complete it before the end of the day. I noticed myself starting to get frustrated and took five, 4-7-8 breaths. This helped me realize that it is okay if we don’t finish and that I could work the end of the activity into my plans for the next day.”

Assess my own personal feelings, strengths, and limitations and how they impact my relationships with others.

Team Hype Up

Youth Development Leaders jointly develop team mantras or chants. They can be used before and after meetings, or during any program time where Youth Development Leaders want to build a shared feeling of unity and excitement.

Resources/Materials: Poster, writing tools

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

TEAM HYPE UP

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders identifying a mantra related to a Character Development characteristic, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. This mantra may be transcribed onto a poster and hung in a shared hallway or in a meeting spot.
- Before and after meetings, Youth Development Leaders refer to the team mantra to connect with each other and the bigger purpose of their work. Mantras may also be used to reframe challenging experiences that Youth Development Leaders experience.

This might sound like...

- "Let's remember to follow the golden rule today: To show and give respect. On three let's put our hands together and have a great day! 1- 2- 3, RESPECT!"
- "Today I had a tough day delegating tasks to some of the kids and was feeling overwhelmed. But then I remembered our team mantra around responsibility and asked for help. After that, I realized that I was feeling less stress and was able to enjoy the activity more."

Assess my own personal feelings, strengths, and limitations and how they impact my relationships with others.

Cool Down Session

Youth Development Leaders can meet briefly after an intense exchange of emotions to regroup and take a breather. Youth Development Leaders can discuss what happened, identify each other's strengths, and plan how to move forward.

Resources/Materials: Breathing techniques, cards with yoga poses

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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COOL DOWN SESSION

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders stepping away for 5 minutes after an intense exchange of emotions. When recalling the exchange, they identify each other's strengths. All parties involved are included in discussions of how to move forward from the incident.
- Youth Development Leaders using breathing techniques, yoga, and mindfulness to manage their emotions. Cards depicting yoga poses or meditation techniques could be helpful tools.

This might sound like...

- "That was a really intense interaction just now with some of the kids, I am feeling a little overstimulated. Can you cover me for a few minutes? I need to step out to do some of my breathing techniques. Is that alright?"

Assess my own personal feelings, strengths, and limitations and how they impact my relationships with others.

Tap In and Out

When Youth Development Leaders feel overwhelmed or less qualified to lead an activity, they draw on the strengths of others in their group and they can “tap in” and “tap out” with another Youth Development Leader to take over while they reset.

Resources/Materials: None

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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TAP IN AND OUT

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders calling on each other during a challenging interaction with a youth to try to improve communication with the youth. Knowing that the other Youth Development Leader has an existing strong relationship with that youth may result in an overall more positive interaction.
- Youth Development Leaders calling on each other during an activity or skill that they know the other is more proficient in. This allows the Youth Development Leader who “tapped out” to use their time to help in other ways and may facilitate a stronger learning experience for youth.

This might sound like...

- “I am really having a hard time helping the kids out with their homework today. I am starting to feel frustrated and I know that you have an engineering background, would you mind helping them out over there? I can cover your station here and we can switch back when you’re done.”

Assess my own personal feelings, strengths, and limitations and how they impact my relationships with others.

Youth Development Leader Check-ins

Youth Development Leader check-ins are formal and informal opportunities to discuss how things are going with one another and provide support. This might be one-on-one or with a group.

Resources/Materials: None

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LEADER CHECK-INS

This might look like...

- *Paired Check-In:* Youth Development Leaders regularly asking each other, “How are you feeling?” and describing their feelings and emotional highs and lows. This encourages Youth Development Leaders to recognize one another’s needs and provide the necessary support.
- *Group Check-In:* Youth Development Leaders sharing how they are feeling at the beginning of meetings, their emotional highs and lows since the last meeting, and how they’ve handled their highs and lows. This might be done collectively with thumbs up or down and/or asking for volunteers who are willing to share.

This might sound like...

- “Before we get started today, let’s have a minute to reflect on one thing this week that made you happy, one thing that made you sad, frustrated, or challenged you, and one thing you did to overcome that challenging event. I’d like a couple of people to share with the group, do we have any volunteers?”

Coach youth to manage and learn from their ongoing emotional experiences.

Mindfulness Activities

Help Youth Development Leaders intentionally set aside time to practice silent or guided focused awareness. Youth Development Leaders might practice mindfulness activities with each other and reflect and discuss about how they can best support youth during emotional experiences.

Resources/Materials: Breathing techniques, guided meditation

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders spending the first 5 minutes of meetings, trainings, or other professional development opportunities reflecting upon a time they felt happy, sad, angry, etc., how they handled their emotions in the moment, and what they would do differently looking back.
- *Mindful Thought:* Youth Development Leaders practicing thinking before speaking and considering how their messages will be received (e.g. "Am I going to hurt someone if I say this?"). They also regularly remind each other of mindful practices visually and display signs as reminders.

This might sound like...

- "Today during a difficult interaction with a youth, I was able to scaffold a breathing exercise to diffuse the situation. We took turns belly breathing together until the intense emotions had passed. Then, we talked about the event that made them respond that way and how the breathing helped them calm down."

Coach youth to manage and learn from their ongoing emotional experiences.

Emotion Board

Youth Development Leaders create a board with words, phrases, and scenarios that help youth manage their emotions during a group discussion. This can be adapted to focus on basic emotions with younger youth and more complex scenarios for older youth.

Resources/Materials: Poster boards, slips of paper, writing tools

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

EMOTION BOARD

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders developing a board with emotion management words and phrases based on collective experiences, books, or other materials. This provides an opportunity for youth to engage and connect with one another and understand how to translate emotion management into other aspects of their lives.
- Youth Development Leaders asking youth participants to share strategies they use to manage their emotions or other techniques they have seen or heard on slips of paper. Then Youth Development Leaders write up these experiences and develop an activity or a poster board to discuss them together.

This might sound like...

- “Team, we are looking to collect ideas for our emotion board, that will display phrases and scenarios. Please think of examples of times we have seen youth need to manage an intense emotion, including things that happen before, during, and after the event to help facilitate discussions.”

Coach youth to manage and learn from their ongoing emotional experiences.

Breathing Techniques

Youth Development Leaders encourage youth to use breathing techniques to manage their emotions. Cards depicting yoga poses or meditation techniques could be helpful tools for this activity. Practicing these skills can make it easier for youth to use them when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Resources/Materials: Breathing techniques, yoga cards

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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BREATHING TECHNIQUES

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders compiling a series of breathing techniques or patterns that are developmentally appropriate for the youth in their program. Youth Development Leaders display the techniques in a well-populated area or designate a breathing space in the program area.
- Youth Development Leaders using yoga to facilitate breathing techniques. Yoga cards or displays can help illustrate the yoga pose, while Youth Development Leaders facilitate breathing during the activity.

This might sound like...

- “I can see that you are feeling some intense emotions right now and I think these breathing cards could help. How about we step over here into this area with less people and look at a few of the cards together to see if there is something we want to do together for a few minutes?”

Create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion.

Emotion Sign Language

Teach youth sign language for different emotions so that they can communicate with Youth Development Leaders, who can then gauge how youth feel. This would be particularly helpful for programs with many youths who are not native English speakers, or who are experiencing intense emotional states and cannot communicate well at that time.

Resources/Materials: Resources to teach sign language like charts, posters, videos, practice sheets, writing tools

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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EMOTION SIGN LANGUAGE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders collecting resources to learn sign language for emotion words themselves during program planning time. Then, Youth Development Leaders teach youth signs for important feelings and emotions. This can be done at the beginning of the program or at the end.
- Youth Development Leaders working with program youth who are not native speakers of English to teach them how to sign specific emotion words. Youth Development Leaders make special cards to give to youth that they can use until they learn the sign or put up posters in the program space for all youth to refer to.

This might sound like...

- “Today we are going to try to use more sign language when we are talking about feelings and emotions during program time. Remember, we hung up a poster near the front door that we can use to refer to the different signs. If you forget what one of the signs are, that’s okay! Let’s work on getting used to checking in with all youth on how they are feeling and communicate verbally and with signs, if possible.”

Create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion.

Youth Check-in

Youth Development Leaders check in with youth.

Resources/Materials: Check-in sheets

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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YOUTH CHECK-IN

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders passing out check-in sheets with faces displaying emotions to signal how they are feeling, gauging how youth are feeling and adjusting planned activities accordingly. For example, if many students are feeling tired, maybe doing something physical first to increase energy would be more appropriate.
- Youth Development Leaders setting aside a structured time before the program starts for youth to discuss challenges and highlights that they experienced in the previous week.

This might sound like...

- “Before we get started today, let’s all take a look at this sheet that I’ve passed around. It has weather signs that might relate to how you’re all feeling—sunny, partly cloudy, and rainy. Please circle whichever image you relate to most, so that I can keep in mind how you’re feeling throughout the activities.”

Create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion.

Group Reflection

Youth Development Leaders encourage group reflection.

Resources/Materials: None

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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GROUP REFLECTION

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders regularly setting aside intentional time with youth to discuss constructive ways to handle their emotions. For example, if a youth is upset about missing a goal in a soccer game, staff members and volunteers remind the youth that there will be other games, and the youth can practice in the meantime to make a goal in the next game.

This might sound like...

- “Before we get started today, let’s have a minute to reflect on one thing this week that made you happy, one thing that made you sad, frustrated, or challenged you, and one thing you did to overcome that challenging event. I’d like a couple of people to share with the group, do we have any volunteers?”

Create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion.

Individual Reflection

Youth Development Leaders encourage individual reflection.

Resources/Materials: Journals, writing tools

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders giving youth journals to write in at the beginning of each day. Youth can reflect on what emotion management means and how to incorporate it into times of high or low emotion and possibly react differently in the future.
- Youth Development Leaders giving youth journals to write in at the end of each day. Youth can write about what happened that day during the program, or something else they'd like to reflect on.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X] and [Youth Y], you both just yelled at each other and said some hurtful things. Everyone feels overwhelmed sometimes, but it’s important that we treat everyone in the program with respect. Maybe in today’s session, you both can journal about why you felt as you did, how you reacted, and a more helpful, respectful way you could react in the future.”

Recognize the emotional needs of others and respond appropriately to what they are feeling based on their choice of words, tone of voice, expressions, and other non-verbal behavior.

Team Hype Up

Youth Development Leaders jointly develop team mantras or chants. They can be used before and after meetings, or during program any time where Youth Development Leaders want to build a shared feeling of unity and excitement.

Resources/Materials: Poster

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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TEAM HYPE UP

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders identifying a mantra related to a Character Development characteristic, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. This mantra may be transcribed onto a poster and hung in a shared hallway or in a meeting spot.
- Before and after meetings, Youth Development Leaders refer to the team mantra to connect with each other and the bigger purpose of their work. Mantras may also be used to reframe challenging experiences that Youth Development Leaders experience.

This might sound like...

- "I know that today was a tough day with the kids. Thank you everyone for your hard work, I know we are feeling tired and frustrated. Let's remember why we're here today. That's because we all want the kids to have the best camp experience ever, but that means that some days are going to be better than others. If you want to talk more, we can do that, otherwise I'll see you tomorrow and we'll try again to give them the best camp experience ever!"

Recognize the emotional needs of others and respond appropriately to what they are feeling based on their choice of words, tone of voice, expressions, and other non-verbal behavior.

Tap In and Out

When Youth Development Leaders feel overwhelmed by youth; know that one youth, and a Youth Development Leader, have a strong relationship; or that another Youth Development Leader is particularly strong in an activity or skill, they can “tap out” and “tap in” another Youth Development Leader to take over their task while they take a short break to reset.

Resources/Materials: None

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

TAP IN AND OUT

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders calling on each other during a challenging interaction with a youth to try to improve communication with the youth. Knowing that the other Youth Development Leader has an existing strong relationship with that youth may result in an overall more positive interaction.
- Youth Development Leaders can call on each other during an activity or skill that they know the other is more proficient in. This allows the Youth Development Leader who “tapped out” to use their time to help in other ways and may facilitate a stronger learning experience for youth.

This might sound like...

- “I am really having a hard time helping the kids out with their homework today. I am starting to feel frustrated and I know that you have an engineering background, would you mind helping them out over there? I can cover your station here and we can switch back when you’re done.”

Create a culture in which people actively care for each other, use affirmations, and pay attention to youth when they communicate about things that matter to them.

Visualizing Values

Display signs with messages about the values Youth Development Leaders want to encourage in youth. These values may be related to a Character Development practice area, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. Youth Development Leaders may also display slogans that value different cultures and may be in different languages.

Resources/Materials: Posters, signs, banners, or murals, writing tools

EMPATHY

EMPATHY

VISUALIZING VALUES

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders identifying values related to a Character Development practice area, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. This value may be transcribed onto a poster or banner and hung in the program space. Youth Development Leaders hold each other and youth accountable to these values.

This might sound like...

- "Program team, let's brainstorm some values that are important to us, then write them on a poster board to display and share with youth when we're finished. What do you think is the most important value you hold while working with youth at this program? How does this value align with the core values of the Y?"

Create a culture in which people actively care for each other, use affirmations, and pay attention to youth when they communicate about things that matter to them.

Set Program Culture

Youth Development Leaders, with youth input, set a program culture that embraces values, principles, or ideals such as diversity, excellence, or team work. Youth set goals and communicate important values. Consider having frequent, open conversations with youth about inclusive behaviors that the youth value, and then create and display a social contract to follow. Youth Development Leaders hold each other accountable, as well.

Resources/Materials: Posters, signs, banners, or murals, writing tools

EMPATHY

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SET PROGRAM CULTURE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders identifying a mantra related to a character trait, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. This value may be transcribed onto a poster or banner and hung in the program space.
- Youth Development Leaders working with youth to identify values that they hold and discussing how they relate to values held by Youth Development Leaders and the program. Youth can make their own posters that are then put up in a program space for all to see.

This might sound like...

- "Today we're going to talk about the values that are key to all of us here at the program. We're working together, Youth Development Leaders and kids, to come up with the things that will make us feel important and seen. We'll make a poster to remember these values. Take a few minutes to think about what this means for you. I'll start—one important thing to me is that when I am talking, I feel people are listening. Does anybody else feel that way? Let's come up with a value that reflects that feeling."

Effectively listen, ask open-ended questions, use positive body language and a positive tone of voice.

I Tell, You Tell

Youth Development Leaders can create opportunities for active listening and conflict resolution during everyday conversations and times of conflict. For example, Youth Development Leaders may share updates with one another about their days, repeat or paraphrase what they heard, and react to their stories with individualized attention.

Resources/Materials: None

EMPATHY

EMPATHY

I TELL, YOU TELL

This might look like...

- *Paired:* Youth Development Leaders regularly asking each other, “How is your day going?” They describe their experiences with one another with the goal of showing understanding and support. They may also ask follow ups like, “I heard you say you are feeling ... is that correct?” or “Is there anything I can do to help you?”
- *Group:* Youth Development Leaders meeting as a group to describe their experiences in the program. Conversations focus around the person who is sharing, with other Youth Development Leaders listening and affirming what they hear. Ending with a group high-five might be appropriate.

This might sound like...

- “I really need to talk to someone about what happened today. Would you mind listening and brainstorming with me about some things that I might be able to do to make it better? Thanks so much, I need someone to listen right now.”

Effectively listen, ask open-ended questions, use positive body language and a positive tone of voice.

Mindful Thought

Youth Development Leaders encourage themselves, each other, and youth to think before speaking, and they consider how their message might be received (e.g., “Am I going to hurt someone if I say this?”).

Resources/Materials: None

EMPATHY

EMPATHY

MINDFUL THOUGHT

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders regularly reminding themselves, each other, and youth in the program to ask themselves, “Am I going to hurt someone if I say this?” or to consider “What is this person trying to tell me?” Mindful thought creates time to think before speaking, and encourages perspective taking to minimize miscommunication.
- Youth Development Leaders practicing focused awareness. This practice encourages them to think about how they are feeling, check-in with their physical body, and become calm before interacting with others.

This might sound like...

- “Alright everyone, let’s break up into our groups now. Remember leaders, it’s important to think carefully about how you are going to lead your team to success during this activity. When giving feedback, think, ‘Am I going to hurt someone’s feelings if I say this?’ or ‘Is this feedback helping improve the product, or am I just reacting right now?’ If you have any questions, let me know!”

Model and apply cultural sensitivity, compassion, and global awareness in one's work.

Set Program Culture

Youth Development Leaders, with youth input, set a program culture that embraces values, principles, or ideals such as diversity, excellence, or team work. Youth set goals and communicate important values.

Consider having frequent, open conversations with youth about inclusive behaviors that the youth value, and then create and display a social contract to follow. Youth Development Leaders hold each other accountable, as well.

Resources/Materials: Posters, signs, banners, or murals, writing tools

EMPATHY

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SET PROGRAM CULTURE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders identifying a mantra related to a character trait, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. Then Youth Development Leaders discuss and design activities aimed to encourage youth to think about values from different perspectives and cultures.
- Youth Development Leaders working with youth to identify values that they hold and discussing how they relate to values held by Youth Development Leaders and the program. Youth can make their own posters that are then put up in a program space for all to see.

This might sound like...

- "Today we're going to talk about the values that are key to all of us here at the program. We're working together, Youth Development Leaders and kids, to come up with the things that will make us feel important and seen. We'll make a poster to remember these values. Take a few minutes to think about what this means for you. I'll start—one important thing to me is that when I am talking, I feel people are listening. Does anybody else feel that way? Let's come up with a value that reflects that feeling."

Model and apply cultural sensitivity, compassion, and global awareness in one's work.

We Are Family

Youth Development Leaders help families feel welcome in the program.

Resources/Materials: None

EMPATHY

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WE ARE FAMILY

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders developing communication plans that best meet the needs of the parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s), so that each family is informed about their youth's involvement and development in the program.
- Youth Development Leaders providing youth the opportunity to include their parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) in certain activities if they wish, such as organizing a soccer game where family members can play on the same team as their children. For all activities, translate program materials into necessary languages. Please provide youth with the opportunity to communicate across two languages if their parents only speak a language other than English.

This might sound like...

- "Hi [Parent X]! Thanks so much for picking up [Youth X] today! We're having a soccer game next Wednesday at 6:00 pm and we'd love to see you if you're able to attend. If you can't make it this time, that's OK, there will be more opportunities for you to hang out with us later in the year!"

Create a safe space that promotes feelings of mutual respect, acceptance, and appreciation among youth and leaders.

Youth Interests

Youth Development Leaders take the time to show interest in the lives of each youth and get to know them more.

Resources/Materials: None

EMPATHY

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YOUTH INTERESTS

This might look like...

- During free play, Youth Development Leaders may join youth who are playing sports or on their phones. They may ask youth about what they do for fun, their favorite subject in school, favorite TV show or book, etc., and then ask follow-up questions.
- Youth Development Leaders work together to learn about each other's interests and how they might relate with youth in their program. They can model support for each other during games and activities and show appreciation with each other.

This might sound like...

- "How was your weekend, [Youth X]? / It was okay, I had a lot of homework. / That can be tough, but the work will pay off. Did you get to do anything fun? / Yeah, I went to the park and played soccer, my favorite sport! / That's great, do you have a favorite player? Were you following the World Cup?"

Create a safe space that promotes feelings of mutual respect, acceptance, and appreciation among youth and leaders.

Together, We're Stronger

Youth Development Leaders help participants from different cultures feel welcome.

Resources/Materials: None

EMPATHY

EMPATHY

TOGETHER, WE'RE STRONGER

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders organizing an event, which may include music, entertainment, food, or fashion from other cultures. Youth Development Leaders can assign youth different countries and ask them to recreate the countries' flags and find a few fun facts, or have youth choose a country or culture that they are interested in.
- Youth Development Leaders intervening after witnessing exclusionary behavior and positively encouraging youth to do the same. For example, Youth Development Leaders can address the behavior and might create roles for youth in an activity to involve them (e.g., scorekeeper for sports game, helper during tutoring sessions); if English is a second language for most participants, a staff member, volunteer, or youth translator may be called on to support communication in the program.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X]: My parents came from [Country] before I was born, but I haven't been there. / [Youth Y]: [Country]?! My mom says you [offensive behavior] / Youth Development Leader: [Youth Y], how would you feel if someone said that about where your parents are from?”

Create a safe space that promotes feelings of mutual respect, acceptance, and appreciation among youth and leaders.

I See You, Friend

Youth Development Leaders help participants from different cultures feel welcome.

Resources/Materials: Privilege activity

EMPATHY

EMPATHY

I SEE YOU, FRIEND

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders participating in an activity to identify differences in their privilege to understand experiences that people bring with them in other parts of their lives. The activity leader presents several statements, and participants take one step forward when a statement applies to them. At the end of the session, one's privilege—or lack thereof—is apparent. Depending on the group, it could be good to reset after each statement, so one person is not left standing uncomfortably at the back of the room. One could also try to do the privilege walk through an online platform to maintain anonymity.
- Youth Development Leaders providing structured activities to help youth get to know each other, including icebreakers (e.g., Two Truths and a Lie or Where the Wind Blows) or activities (e.g., pairing up with someone who has the same birthday, color of shoes, etc.).

This might sound like...

- “Today during our staff meeting we are going to do an activity called the privilege walk. You may have seen this activity before; I have a set of statements here and if it applies to you, I’m going to ask that you take a step forward. At the end of the list we will look around the room and discuss more about what we have learned and how this might apply to our work with youth in our program.”

Intentionally recognize the influence of youth's self-identity (across Y-USA's dimensions of diversity) and how this may affect interpersonal interactions.

Together, We're Stronger

Youth Development Leaders help participants from different cultures feel welcome.

Resources/Materials: None

EMPATHY

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TOGETHER, WE'RE STRONGER

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders ask that youth choose something about their themselves, family, or their community to focus on and describe how it relates to their experiences at the Y. Youth Development Leaders might choose dimensions of interest like language use, faith/beliefs, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds to focus the activity.
- Youth Development Leaders preparing for the day's activities by considering the diverse needs of the youth in their program. Drawing from the diversity in programs (age, race, gender, economic background), they can design an activity in such a way that all feel welcome and considered.

This might sound like...

- "Thanks [Youth X] for pointing out a different perspective on this activity here. I didn't think of that because I saw this from just my own viewpoint. Would you mind sharing with the group a little bit more about what you told me and how this might look different in your culture?"

Intentionally recognize the influence of youth's self-identity (across Y-USA's dimensions of diversity) and how this may affect interpersonal interactions.

I See You, Friend

Youth Development Leaders encourage youth to value their shared and different experiences.

Resources/Materials: Privilege activity

EMPATHY

EMPATHY

I SEE YOU, FRIEND

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders participating in an activity to identify differences in their privilege to understand experiences that people bring with them in other parts of their lives. The activity leader presents several statements, and participants take one step forward when a statement applies to them. At the end of the session, one's privilege—or lack thereof—is apparent. Depending on the group, it could be good to reset after each statement, so one person is not left standing uncomfortably at the back of the room. One could also try to do the privilege walk through an online platform to maintain anonymity.
- Youth Development Leaders providing structured activities to help youth get to know each other, including icebreakers (e.g., Two Truths and a Lie or Where the Wind Blows) or activities (e.g., pairing up with someone who has the same birthday, color of shoes, etc.).

This might sound like...

- “In today’s activity, we’re going to be talking about what is going on in our community. Because we have so many different people here, from different backgrounds, we have to understand that what we think might be different and the ways that we view things could be. Some people are from different races in this room, and therefore they have different experiences being in our community.”

Use appropriate, S.A.F.E. (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit), and fun activities based on participants' age, ability, and interests.

Youth Interests

Youth Development Leaders take the time to show interest in the lives of each youth and get to know them more in order to better understand their level of comfort with an activity or skill.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

YOUTH INTERESTS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders joining youth during a game or activity, for example a sports game. They may ask youth about their experience with that sport to gauge their level of comfort. Through asking follow-up questions, Youth Development Leaders can plan to scaffold aspects of the sport to promote a sense of success and mastery.
- Youth Development Leaders working together to learn about each other's interests and how they might fit with youth in the program. Youth Development Leaders and youth with similar interests might choose to model skills for each other, and then have youth teach other youth.

This might sound like...

- "Please raise your hand if you are interested in playing soccer with some of the other kids here today. Great! Let's come over here and figure out who can play which positions and if we need to explain the rules to anyone who might not know how to play already."

Use appropriate, S.A.F.E. (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit), and fun activities based on participants' age, ability, and interests.

Break it Down

Youth Development Leaders break down difficult tasks into smaller, simpler steps to make them more manageable for youth. This is an opportunity to make large tasks simpler for youth and to measure their tasks and obligations to projects.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

BREAK IT DOWN

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders discussing how to break down a planned activity into smaller chunks during program planning. Discussions about the level of difficulty, plan for encountering challenges, and supporting Youth Development Leaders to facilitate the activity are important. This creates a plan that can flexibly guide the activity's implementation during program time.
- Youth Development Leaders checking in with youth during the activity to gauge the success of the project. If youth appear to be too challenged or not challenged enough, Youth Development Leaders can work together to better align the activity with youth ability, or pair youth together who have complementary skills.

This might sound like...

- "Our goal is having youth build a bridge today using different materials. What instructions do we need to give them so they start to build different designs with the materials? What are some questions that we might expect from the group? Who might work well together on this activity?"

Encourage youth to try new skills and provide support and guidance through the learning process.

You ___ So You Achieve

Youth Development Leaders attribute youth success to effort, strategy, attention, practice, or persistence. They emphasize the role that youths' efforts played in their successes, and support at least some contributions or accomplishments of youth by acknowledging what they've said or done.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

YOU ___ SO YOU ACHIEVE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders discussing in meetings ways to attribute youth success to malleable factors and using nonevaluative language (e.g., “hardworking,” “helpful,” “smart,” “generous,” etc., instead of “good,” “beautiful,” “perfect,” etc.). In the meeting, compile a list of words and ask the group to draw two columns of words and decide which categories the words belong in.
- Youth Development Leaders finding time during program time to identify youth who are engaged in an activity and show support. They might ask questions to identify how the activity is going and have a conversation about their process while highlighting the youth's successes.

This might sound like...

- “Great job on this activity so far! I noticed how you planned out your design here in a sketch. Was there anything that you found didn't go according to plan? How could you fix it? Great thinking, let's try to adapt your design here, update the sketch, and see how it goes. That was a clever solution!”

Encourage youth to try new skills and provide support and guidance through the learning process.

I Tell, You Tell

Youth Development Leaders can create opportunities for active listening and conflict resolution during everyday conversations and times of conflict. For example, Youth Development Leaders may create time during their program to discuss one-on-one or in a group with youth, to provide support and guidance.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

I TELL, YOU TELL

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders talking one-on-one with youth to discuss how an activity is going and providing support. If a challenge comes up, Youth Development Leaders listen and repeat what they are hearing from youth, and brainstorm ways to resolve the challenge.
- Youth Development Leaders creating opportunities for pairs of youth to reflect on their progress in an activity, during the program time. Youth in the program can discuss and support one another and share solutions with the larger group.

This might sound like...

- “Now as pairs, talk with your partner about how the activity is going so far. Listen closely to what they are saying and repeat back to them what you heard. Then, brainstorm together some ways that you might be able to overcome a challenge or another tip that might help them. Then I’ll ask for volunteers to share with the larger group. If you need my help or another Youth Development Leaders when thinking about solutions, please raise your hand.”

Encourage youth to try new skills and provide support and guidance through the learning process.

Reframing

Youth Development Leaders encourage youth to see mistakes and challenges as opportunities to ask for help. Reframing promotes an environment in which youth can feel comfortable discussing challenging emotions. Asking questions to guide youth to reframe challenges or obstacles will allow Youth Development Leaders to understand youth perspectives.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders helping youth counteract negative self-talk. When youth say, “I can’t do this”, “I’m not very smart”, or something similar, Youth Development Leaders can share a time when they struggled to help youth see that through persistence, they can achieve. After sharing, Youth Development Leaders can ask, “What’s one thing you did well? Or one thing you’re able to do to improve?”
- Youth Development Leaders talking one-on-one with youth to discuss how an activity is going and providing support if there is a challenge or a mistake. Youth Development Leaders might ask guiding questions like, “Do you think there is another way we might be able to do this” or “I wonder what will happen if we try this? What do you think will happen? Should we try another way first?”

This might sound like...

- “Don’t worry about this small mistake, mistakes are times when we can learn the most! Now that we know this way didn’t work out, do you have any other ideas of how we might be able to do this?”

REFRAMING

Provide opportunities for youth to lead, problem-solve, and make decisions.

Know How You Feel

Youth Development Leaders empower youth to be aware of their emotions and regulate them properly.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

KNOW HOW YOU FEEL

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders instilling a practice in which youth who are overwhelmed can speak with a Youth Development Leader and let them know, so that they can adjust programming or let the youth take a break, if necessary. Youth Development Leaders should remind youth about this “open door” policy frequently.
- Youth Development Leaders checking in with youth who seem checked out, so that they can figure out what’s going on and how to make sure all youth still get something out of the program.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X], I noticed that you haven’t been able to get much of this art project done. What’s going on? What would help you finish this activity or enjoy it more?”

Provide opportunities for youth to lead, problem-solve, and make decisions.

Helping Hands

Youth Development Leaders empower youth to take on more responsibilities during program sessions.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

HELPING HANDS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing an individual or group of youth with opportunities to plan and lead other youth in a new game, activity, or lesson. A sign up sheet can help Youth Development Leaders plan for this activity. Youth Development Leaders can support youth in how to best plan a lesson and give instructions, as well as provide any necessary materials.
- Youth Development Leaders recruiting youth to set up activities and clean up when the activities are finished. Youth Development Leaders can assign these roles or ask for volunteers.

This might sound like...

- “Okay, it looks like almost everyone is on board with playing Jeopardy. [Youth X], since you wanted to play ‘Heads Up’ instead, would you like to be the scorekeeper, instead?”

Provide youth feedback using specific observations and appreciation of their efforts and accomplishments.

Good Guidance

When youth make errors or need to make improvements, Youth Development Leaders guide and support them in figuring out for themselves how to correct the error or improve. Asking questions about youth processes and understanding the task at hand will help Youth Development Leaders understand youth perspectives.

Resources/Materials: None

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOOD GUIDANCE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders may want to discuss in meetings ways to give feedback to youth using observations. It's helpful if the feedback is paired with some praise. For example, if a youth is struggling with free throws in basketball, but always boosts team morale, praise youth for the positive behaviors before focusing on what could be improved.
- Youth Development Leaders observing youth behavior over time. For example, Youth Development Leaders might notice that a youth continues to struggle with long division, not just math in general, and provide the youth with tips in that specific area.

This might sound like...

- "Thanks for asking for help. I see that you have stopped working on this part of the project. Can you tell me a little bit about what you planning to do here? What do you think is missing between this plan here and what you see your in mind?"

Provide youth feedback using specific observations and appreciation of their efforts and accomplishments.

Recognition Matters

Youth Development Leaders recognize the achievements of youth and encourage youth to recognize the contributions of their peers and program staff.

Resources/Materials: Paper, prizes, writing tools

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

RECOGNITION MATTERS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing youth with a structured time to compliment their peers and Youth Development Leaders. Youth Development Leaders can provide paper; ask youth to write compliments, which may name a youth or be anonymous (e.g., I thought that someone was ___ today.); and display the compliments on a board or wall.
- Youth Development Leaders giving youth points for being responsible and meeting set expectations and tracking the points. Once point totals reach a benchmark, youth receive a prize, which may be tangible or intangible (e.g., free play time). This can encourage youth to be accountable to the group and meet set expectations.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X], thank you so much for participating in our group discussion today! I really appreciated hearing about how you volunteered at a food bank and how you want to make sure people in the community have access to the resources they need. Please go put a marble in your team jar, you’re one step closer to getting a prize from the treasure box!”

Provide structured opportunities for youth to build positive relationships with one another.

Cooperation Nation

Working on activities in groups.

Resources/Materials: Writing tools

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

COOPERATION NATION

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders grouping children and youth into small groups of four or five, providing them the opportunity to work on projects and activities with a shared goal, where each can contribute parts to the final product or activity.
- Youth working in small groups to brainstorm, create, and present a new design or invention.

This might sound like...

- “Let’s break into our groups now and start thinking about what the goals of the activity are, and how, as a group, we can get to the finish line. Think about ways that you will be able to work with each other to get the activity done!”
- “After you have broken into your small groups, assign one person to each of the roles (i.e. group leader, group scribe, group presenter(s)...etc.) and then begin working together to come up with your new idea.”

Provide structured opportunities for youth to build positive relationships with one another.

Group Reflection

Youth Development Leaders encourage group reflection.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

GROUP REFLECTION

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders regularly setting aside intentional time with youth to discuss constructive ways to handle challenges. For example, if a youth is upset about being unable to do a backstroke, Youth Development Leaders can help the youth practice and brainstorm ways to improve that style of swimming.
- Youth Development Leaders creating opportunities during the program for youth to work together. This can be in pairs, small groups, or larger groups. The activity must lend itself to group work, not where youth sit together but work on an activity separately. At the end of the activity, asking youth to reflect on techniques that worked well and others that didn't, and share with the larger group.

This might sound like...

- “Okay, everyone pair up! Today we’re discussing how we can better communicate with people in our lives. Take a minute to think about a time you really felt heard or understood, and what that felt like, and a time you felt no matter what you said, the other person didn’t understand you. Write down what you discuss with your partner and prepare to share with the larger group after the activity.”

Provide structured opportunities for youth to build positive relationships with one another.

Getting to Know You

Youth Development Leaders facilitate youth getting to know each other.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing structured opportunities for youth to get to know each other. These opportunities can be icebreakers (e.g., Two Truths and a Lie or Where the Wind Blows) or activities (e.g., pairing up with someone who has the same birthday, color of shoes, etc.).
- Youth Development Leaders creating opportunities for them to get to know youth better. This can be done with icebreakers and activities, or might happen naturally during program time.

This might sound like...

- “Everyone, please pair up with someone you don’t know well. I want you to ask five unique questions about each other’s hobbies, families, etc. Remember the answers! You’ll be presenting about your partner back to the group.”
- “[Youth X], you’re a big Spiderman fan? [Youth Y] and I were just talking about the new movie and they’re a big fan, like you!”

Provide structured opportunities for youth to build positive relationships with one another.

Recognition Matters

Youth Development Leaders recognize the achievements of youth and encourage youth to recognize the contributions of their peers and program staff.

Resources/Materials: Paper, prizes, writing tools

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RECOGNITION MATTERS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing youth with a structured time to compliment their peers and Youth Development Leaders. Youth Development Leaders can provide paper; ask youth to write compliments, which may name a youth or be anonymous (e.g., I thought that someone was ___ today.); and display the compliments on a board or wall.
- Youth Development Leaders giving youth points for being responsible and meeting set expectations and tracking the points. Once point totals reach a benchmark, youth receive a prize, which may be tangible or intangible (e.g., free play time). This can encourage youth to be accountable to the group and meet set expectations.

This might sound like...

- “Thanks for participating in field day, everyone! Thanks to your teamwork, we had a successful day. Let’s take a minute to think of a time a teammate helped you in an activity today, big or small. Okay, now let’s go around the room and share some words of appreciation.”

Develop and maintain respectful, friendly, and cooperative relationships with families and other partners.

High Five

Youth Development Leaders are encouraged to talk often to youths' families.

Resources/Materials: Chalkboard, white board or paper, writing tools

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

HIGH FIVE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders writing a question or topic of interest for each day of the week. The question of the day is posted in the “question of the day” location of the room for staff members to discuss with the parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) of children and youth during pick-up.
- Youth Development Leaders sending home a daily topic of interest with something their child worked on in class that day.

This might sound like...

- “Are you all interested in attending parent’s night? [Youth X] was such a great leader today [EXPLAIN HOW]. They were such a great example to others and we wanted to share with you this example of how awesome it is to have [Youth X] here with us at the Y.”

Develop and maintain respectful, friendly, and cooperative relationships with families and other partners.

We Are Family

Youth Development Leaders make families feel welcome in the program.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

WE ARE FAMILY

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders developing communication plans that best meet the needs of the parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s), so that each family is informed about their youth's involvement and development in the program.
- Youth Development Leaders providing youth the opportunity to include their parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) in certain activities if they wish, such as organizing a soccer game where family members can play on the same team as their children. For all activities, translate program materials into necessary languages. Please provide youth with the opportunity to communicate across two languages if their parents only speak a language other than English.

This might sound like...

- “Hi [Parent X], good to see you today! [Youth X] and I have been working on free throws in our basketball program—she's really improved and she's such a team player. I just wanted to let you know it's been really great to see her progress and I'm glad we have her on the team.”

Provide structured opportunities for staff and families to work together toward common goals for youth.

High Five

Youth Development Leaders are encouraged to talk often to youths' families.

Resources/Materials: Chalkboard, white board, or paper, writing tools

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

HIGH FIVE

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders write a question or make a phone call to ask parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) how they can better help their child, and what some of their goals are for them in the program.
- Youth Development Leaders send home a daily report with something their child needs to work on, and asking parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) how they may better serve their family.

This might sound like...

- "Today, [Youth X] struggled/did great with their reading homework."
- "Today, [Youth X's]'s behavior was not appropriate. They are usually a better example to others. I'm wondering if there is something specific I can do with [Youth X] in class to help them have a more positive attitude?"

Provide structured opportunities for Youth Development Leaders and families to work together toward common goals for youth.

We Are Family

Youth Development Leaders make families feel welcome in the program.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

WE ARE FAMILY

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders developing communication plans that best meet the needs of the parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s), so that each family is informed about their youth's involvement and development in the program.
- Youth Development Leaders sharing with parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) details about the focus and progress of whatever they are working toward with their child. Asking how to integrate this into their home life and the importance of consistency would be beneficial.

This might sound like...

- "Hi [Parent X], great to see you today! I know you mentioned [Youth X] has been having trouble focusing in class. We've been trying to implement more rewards in the program for behavior we want to see more of, and encouraging more reflection when we see behavior we want to do less of. We'll keep you updated on whether this helps him focus. Maybe at home you can focus on trying to build these skills with [Youth X], too!"

Interact in a positive, inclusive, and nurturing manner.

Snack Chats

Youth Development Leaders sit with youth during lunch/snack to socialize.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

SNACK CHATS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders sit at tables during lunch and snack time so that they can build relationships with the children and youth.
- Youth Development Leaders encourage everyone to sit together during lunch or snack time, and to be inclusive of all youth.

This might sound like...

- “So, this past weekend I got to go swimming! I love to swim. What is your favorite thing to do?”
- “[Youth X], what things do you and [Youth Y] have in common? What did you do in school today?”

Interact in a positive, inclusive, and nurturing manner.

You Are Appreciated

Provide youth the opportunity to appreciate their peers, Youth Development Leaders, and share good deeds.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

YOU ARE APPRECIATED

This might look like...

- At the start of the program, Youth Development Leaders encourage youth to find a “pinky partner” and talk about one thing that they appreciate about one another or something nice that they did for someone else. For older children, simply ask the youth to pair up.
- Youth Development Leaders could also create time for youth to appreciate Youth Development Leaders, and vice versa.

This might sound like...

- “Now, let’s find a partner that we have not talked to this week and tell them one thing that we like about them.”
- “Since [Youth X]’s (home sick, pet died...etc.) let’s all take this butcher paper and make them a card to let them know we are thinking of them.”

Interact in a positive, inclusive, and nurturing manner.

TUMS

Touch (high five or fist bump), **U**se their name, **M**ake eye contact, and **S**mile

Youth Development Leaders greet youth individually.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

TUMS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders using TUMS as a guideline when interacting with youth as they come to the program: **T**ouch (high five or fist bump), **U**se their name, **M**ake eye contact, and **S**mile.
- Youth Development Leaders might create a special handshake or a nickname that they can use to acknowledge youth when they come to the program.

This might sound like...

- “[High five, eye contact, and smile] Welcome to class, [Youth X]! It’s so wonderful to see you today.”

Create a positive rapport and identify shared interests with all youth.

Youth Interests

Youth Development Leaders take the time to show interest in the lives of each youth and get to know them better in order to better understand their level of comfort with an activity or skill.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

YOUTH INTERESTS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders joining youth during a game or activity, for example a sports game. They may ask youth about their experience with that sport to gauge their level of comfort. Through asking follow-up questions, Youth Development Leaders can plan to scaffold aspects of the sport to promote a sense of success and mastery.
- Youth Development Leaders working together to learn about each other's interests and how they might fit with youth in the program. Youth Development Leaders and youth with similar interests might choose to model skills for each other and then have youth teach other youth.

This might sound like...

- "Please raise your hand if you are interested in playing soccer with some of the other kids here today. Great! Let's come over here and figure out who can play which positions and if we need to explain the rules to anyone who might not know how to play already."

Create a positive rapport and identify shared interests with all youth.

Snack Chats

Youth Development Leaders sit with youth during lunch/snack to socialize.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

SNACK CHATS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders sit at tables during lunch and snack time so that they can develop a positive rapport and identify shared interests with the children and youth.
- Youth Development Leaders encourage everyone to sit together during lunch or snack time, and to be inclusive of all youth.

This might sound like...

- “One of my favorite things to do is walk my dog through the park. Does anyone else have any pets that they like to spend time with? Or what other things are your favorite?”
- “Let’s go around the table and share one thing that we all like to do/eat!”

Create a positive rapport and identify shared interests with all youth.

TUMS

Touch (high five or fist bump), **U**se their name, **M**ake eye contact, and **S**mile

Youth Development Leaders greet youth individually.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders use these rules to interact with youth: **T**ouch (high five or fist bump), **U**se their name, **M**ake eye contact, and **S**mile.
- Youth Development Leaders greeting each youth and mentioning something that they have done previously with youth in the program. This might be in reference to a previous activity, a conversation, or anything else!

This might sound like...

- “Remember last week when we played that game together outside? Well I thought of something new that we can try so that we can get better, do you want to do that with me? I really want to know what you think because I know you’re good at this.”

Create a positive rapport and identify shared interests with all youth.

Affinity and Beyond

Build opportunities within and outside the organization for Youth Development Leaders to connect.

Resources/Materials: Connection to affinity groups outside of the organization, if desired.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

AFFINITY AND BEYOND

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders creating and joining affinity groups within their Y, such as a book club or a weekly meet up, to discuss topics of interest.
- Youth Development Leaders joining professional groups within the larger community, such as those with a leadership focus or identity groups.

This might sound like...

- “Hey, I’ve noticed that a lot of our Youth Development Leaders really enjoy making crafts. I’m thinking about starting a craft club so that we can work on projects together and learn from each other. I’m hoping we can learn something new to share with the youth in our program.”
- “I was talking to someone from another Y and she mentioned that she joined a professional group for people of color who work in youth development programs. I’m thinking of joining and I’d love tell our other Youth Development Leaders about this opportunity.”

Help participants create norms and routines for effective group work.

I Can Because You Can

Youth Development Leaders help youth work together and build on their shared and complementary skills.

Resources/Materials: None

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

I CAN BECAUSE YOU CAN

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing opportunities for youth to mentor one another. For example, youth may share something they are “experts” in, explain how to do something, or coach a peer.
- Youth Development Leaders organizing events where they encourage youth to delve into social justice issues of interest through program activities and volunteer work, aiming to understand their own responsibility in promoting change in their community. Youth development leaders should involve youth in selecting, planning, and executing the project and can consider involving parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s), as well.

This might sound like...

- “Okay, for this activity, I want you all to check in with your team to make sure everyone knows how to tie these knots. If you see that someone needs help, practice your teaching skills and help them out.”

Provide opportunities for youth to fulfill tasks and obligations required to successfully complete the project (e.g., assigning youth roles).

Break it Down

Youth Development Leaders break down difficult tasks into smaller, simpler steps to make them more manageable for youth. This is an opportunity to make large tasks simpler for youth and to measure their tasks and obligations to projects.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

BREAK IT DOWN

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders planning program activities to meet the unique needs of youth by preparing an activity that is manageable for all youth. They may draw on previous experiences or ask each other for tips and advice, to ensure that activities are developmentally appropriate and vary in the level of difficulty and number of steps.
- Youth Development Leaders identify children and youth in their program who have showed interest or successfully completed parts of a task, to help others with an activity by peer-to-peer learning and support.

This might sound like...

- “It looks like [Youth X] and [Youth Y] are at a good place with their project today. Let’s stop there for now and have you help some of your friends. Remember, when you’re helping, don’t DO it for them, instead try to break it down into smaller pieces to help them understand. Please raise your hand if you would like some help from [Youth X] and [Youth Y].”

Provide opportunities for youth to fulfill tasks and obligations required to successfully complete the project (e.g., assigning youth roles).

Helping Hands

Youth Development Leaders empower youth to take on more responsibilities during program sessions.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

HELPING HANDS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing an individual or group of youth with opportunities to plan and lead other youth in a new game, activity, or lesson. A sign-up sheet can help Youth Development Leaders plan for this activity. Youth Development Leaders can support youth in how to best plan a lesson and give instructions, as well as provide any necessary materials.
- Youth Development Leaders recruiting youth to set up activities and clean up when the activities are finished. Youth Development Leaders can assign these roles or ask for volunteers.

This might sound like...

- “Okay, thanks for splitting up into groups of four so quickly! On each team, we need one person to read the questions on the sheet I handed out, and another to write. Please volunteer and let me know who is doing what.”

Promote high expectations and provide help only as needed.

Youth Development Leaders Step Back

Youth Development Leaders do not take over or intervene intrusively in assigned tasks or activities. Instead, they support youth in carrying out roles or responsibilities as independently as possible. If youth need time to complete a task or more information, the Youth Development Leaders will support youth without completing the task for them.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LEADERS STEP BACK

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders discussing during meetings ways that they might intervene when youth are completing an activity. Discussing the context in which Youth Development Leaders might feel pressure to help (e.g. during transition time or after 5 minutes of an activity) and the beliefs they might hold about youth's ability level (e.g. what tasks are appropriate to ask for help with or not) may support a stronger awareness of situations where they can promote high expectations.
- Youth Development Leaders might join youth jointly during a game or activity to support youth in performing to their highest level, by gauging youth comfort and helping only when youth might need it.

This might sound like...

- "At today's Youth Development Leaders meeting we are going to discuss times where we might have overstepped during an activity at our program. We all want the youth in our program to learn while they are here, but sometimes I feel that something is taking too long or we have to transition, and I intervene when I shouldn't. Can you think of a time where you might have intervened with a student's learning? What made you think that way and what might you do differently next time?"

Promote high expectations and provide help only as needed.

I Can Because You Can

Youth Development Leaders help youth work together and build on their shared and complementary skills.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

I CAN BECAUSE YOU CAN

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing opportunities for youth to mentor one another. For example, youth may share something they are “experts” in, explain how to do something, or coach a peer.
- Youth Development Leaders organizing events where they encourage youth to delve into social justice issues of interest through program activities and volunteer work, aiming to understand their own responsibility in promoting change in their community. Youth Development Leaders should involve youth in selecting, planning, and executing the project and can consider involving parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s), as well.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X] and [Youth Y] are leading our art project today. I’ve spoken with them and helped them plan this activity, so I think it will go well! Please check in with them if you have any questions, but I’ll also be here as a resource if they’re helping other youth. I’ll let them both present the activity now.”

Promote high expectations and provide help only as needed.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

Youth Development Leaders encourage youth to ask for help and see their peers as knowledgeable and capable of providing support.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders promoting youth learning by co-processing to understand concepts. Youth Development Leaders encourage youth using phrases like “call a friend” and “three before me” to encourage youth to ask peers questions before asking a Youth Development Leader.
- Youth Development Leaders encouraging youth to check in with their peers during program activities, like clean up time, to see whether a peer needs help cleaning or collecting their belongings. Holding youth accountable to an agreed upon set of rules and expectations is important for consistency and follow through.

This might sound like...

- “Thanks for asking for my help! Have you checked in with any of your peers? I know that you can do this, [Youth X] and [Youth Y] might be able to help with this.”
- “You cleaned up your area thoroughly, [Youth X]! It looks like [Youth Y] has a lot left to clean, are you able to help him? Remember, we like to end the day with a clean space so tomorrow it’s ready to go.”

Respect youth's ownership and decision-making within their roles.

Real Talk Friday

Youth Development Leaders should set aside time for youth to present what is happening in their lives, school, and community. Youth Development Leaders also give youth control over what topics they would like to share, how they would like to share the information, and setting ground rules for a discussion. This activity is suitable for older youth.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

REAL TALK FRIDAY

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders setting up time, maybe once a week, for youth to share about what is happening in their lives, their school, or their community during programming. First, Youth Development Leaders will facilitate the development of ground rules when sharing during this time to refer to during future discussions. Then, they can collect topics during an open discussion and keep topics in a jar or write on a sticky note, or collect ideas from an anonymous box, to draw from during discussions.
- Youth Development Leaders might create a sign-up sheet, elect a discussion leader of the week, or encourage team-focused work to develop opportunities for youth to share important topics. Group work, for example, might be most appropriate for community or school level topics.

This might sound like...

- “In order for Free Talk Friday to work best, we are going to first talk together to set some ground rules so we all feel like we want to share. What are some rules we think are important? Respect? That’s a good one. What ground rules do we want to establish for asking questions?”

Respect youth's ownership and decision-making within their roles.

Helping Hands

Youth Development Leaders empower youth to take on more responsibilities during program sessions.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

HELPING HANDS

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders providing an individual or group of youth with opportunities to plan and lead other youth in a new game, activity, or lesson. A sign-up sheet can help Youth Development Leaders plan for this activity. Youth Development Leaders can support youth in how to best plan a lesson and give instructions, as well as provide any necessary materials.
- Youth Development Leaders recruiting youth to set up activities and clean up when the activities are finished. Youth Development Leaders can assign these roles or ask for volunteers.

This might sound like...

- “Okay so sounds like [Youth X], the team leader, wants to update the rules so that everyone will get another chance to try out their design in the race! Let’s all reset! [Youth X] take it from here.”

Support and encourage youth to be successful in their roles.

Pride Wall

Display cards with compliments to peers and Youth Development Leaders. Provide supervision and assistance to younger youth. In a group activity, youth can choose compliments from a list provided. They also can discuss compliments with or without names.

Resources/Materials: Compliment cards and images or phrases of appreciation, hole-puncher, pocket chart to hold cards at the back of the room.

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

PRIDE WALL

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders can collect compliments from the “Compliment Cards” activity and display them publicly. This could be done by posting or transcribing them on a poster board, or even having the compliments displayed using a pocket chart holder.
- Having the Pride Wall accessible to Youth Development Leaders, as well as youth, to be able to freely add compliments. Youth Development Leaders might find time every other week to review the Pride Wall and share some compliments that have been made with or without names. Youth Development Leaders should share compliments they wrote to each other and to youth in the program to encourage youth.

This might sound like...

- “Alright everyone, meet me at the Pride Wall so we can share some compliments from the last couple of weeks. Here’s one that says, ‘[Volunteer A] is so nice and makes me feel happy!’ Let’s clap for [Volunteer A], thanks for all that you do to make us all feel happy.”

Support and encourage youth to be successful in their roles.

Visualizing Values

Display signs with messages about the values Youth Development Leaders want to encourage in youth. These values may be related to a Character Development practice area, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. Youth Development Leaders may also display slogans that value different cultures and may be in different languages.

Resources/Materials: Posters, signs, banners or murals, writing tools

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

VISUALIZING VALUES

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders identifying values related to a Character Development practice area, a YMCA core value, something specific to the sites' location, or anything jointly agreed on by Youth Development Leaders as a shared value. This value may be transcribed onto a poster or banner and hung in the program space. Youth Development Leaders refer to these values during program time, and frame successes and challenges using the values, as well.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X], I see that you’re starting to feel a little frustrated during this activity. Let’s take a second here to stop and think about what we can do here. I wanted to point out that one of our program values is persistence, which means never giving up even if it is difficult! I have seen you persist in challenges before, so I am here now to help you brainstorm!”

Model and fulfill one's roles in the program, and define and discuss them with youth.

Plan, Prep, and Present

Youth Development Leaders start and end sessions within 10 minutes of the scheduled time. Youth Development Leaders have all materials and supplies ready to begin activities (e.g., materials are gathered, set up) and clearly explain each activity to youth and the role they will take on during the activity.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

PLAN, PREP, AND PRESENT

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders plan for program activities during staff meetings or before program time. Youth Development Leaders make sure that all materials and supplies are ready, the day's activities have been planned out and shared amongst staff, and that there is a shared understanding of the goals for the day's activity.
- During program time, Youth Development Leaders clearly explain the role that youth will play in a certain activity. In addition, they can communicate the materials needed, the time allocated for the activity, and how to best ask for support from Youth Development Leaders.

This might sound like...

- "Welcome everyone! Take your seats. At each table we have materials for the activity after our check in, building a bridge. You should have in front of you a piece of paper, 3 inches of tape, and 2 popsicles. Let's complete our check in, then dive into our activity!"

Model and fulfill one's roles in the program, and define and discuss them with youth.

Youth Development Leaders Model

Ways to model include following other Youth Development Leaders' expectations, respecting fellow Youth Development Leaders and youth, and being kind and friendly, but firm when necessary.

Resources/Materials: None

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LEADERS MODEL

This might look like...

- Youth Development Leaders working together to create a shared set of values with definitions and examples of what the value might look like in every day life. Youth Development Leaders might choose to hang up this document [see *Visualizing Values* card], or use this as a team building activity to learn more about how to best support each other and model the best behavior to youth in the programs.
- During program time, Youth Development Leaders support each other to behave according to their values and to treat children and youth the same way.

This might sound like...

- “[Youth X], I’m glad that you’ve finished your project, but it seems that talking about what happened during lunch today at school is distracting some of your peers. Maybe you could share tips you have for finishing this project well, instead? Can you show some of your friends how you got to the final product? Let’s make sure that all our friends are able to finish like you did.”