

How to be an Askable Adult

Thursday, November 16th, 2023

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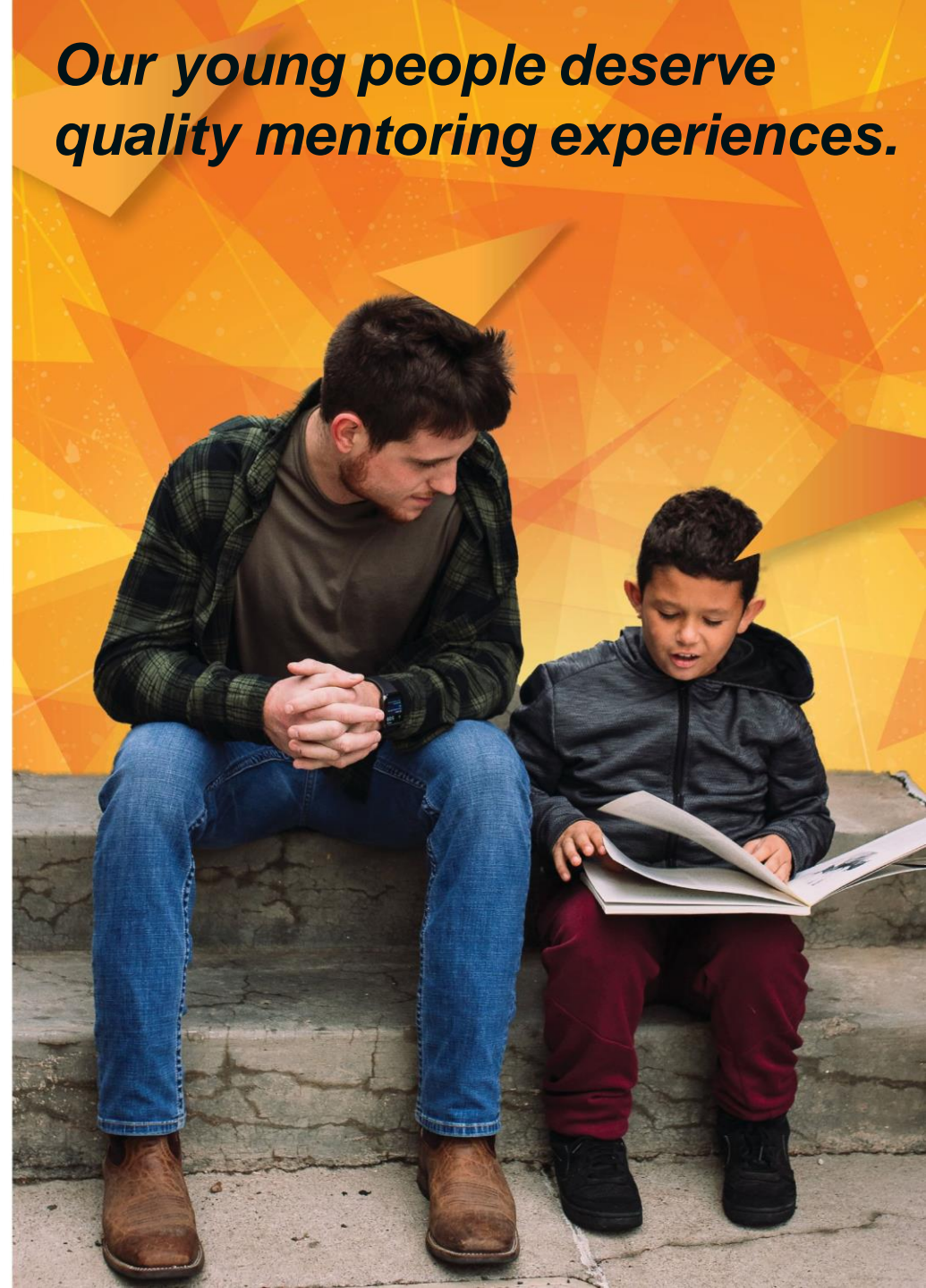
Since Maryland's affiliate of [MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#) launched in 2018, **MENTOR Maryland | DC** has sought to uplift the urgency of a march toward quality mentoring. We officially expanded into DC in 2021.

With the mission and vision to increase the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships across the country and to **close the mentoring gap**, we know programs can only do this when they feel supported, empowered and have the tools and resources to sufficiently carry out safe and effective mentoring relationships.

[MENTOR Maryland | DC](#) is a non-partisan organization that galvanizes the Maryland mentoring movement. We serve as community-based experts and create statewide infrastructure to expand quality relationships for young people.

We fulfill this role through our unique role as a unified clearinghouse for training, research, public awareness, mentor recruitment, and advocacy. MENTOR Maryland | DC provides the critical link between MENTOR's national efforts and local organizations and programs that foster and support quality mentoring relationships across the state.

Our young people deserve quality mentoring experiences.



Offerings from MENTOR MD|DC

Connection to National Mentoring Partnership; resources, best practices, trainings, etc. (including National Mentoring Summit) – www.mentoring.org

FREE Program Consulting/Technical Assistance via NMRC (National Mentoring Resource Center) – www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org

Access to Mentoring Connector – <https://mentormddc.org/mentoringconnector/>

Local, customized trainings, roundtables, communities of practice – <https://mentormddc.org/events/>

Promotion of mentoring best practices: [The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#)

Access to NQMS (National Quality Mentoring System) / Soon MM Quality Program Partners

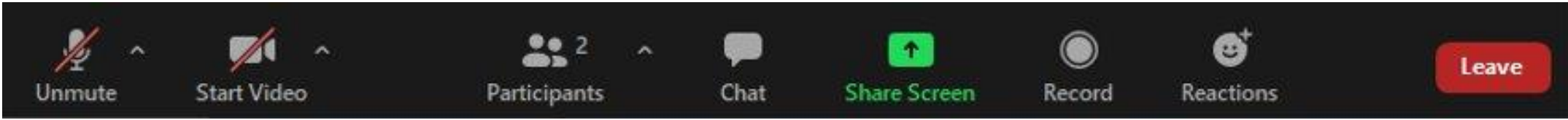
Connection to funding opportunities – www.grants.maryland.gov

Access to <https://www.mentoring.org/resource/start-a-program/>

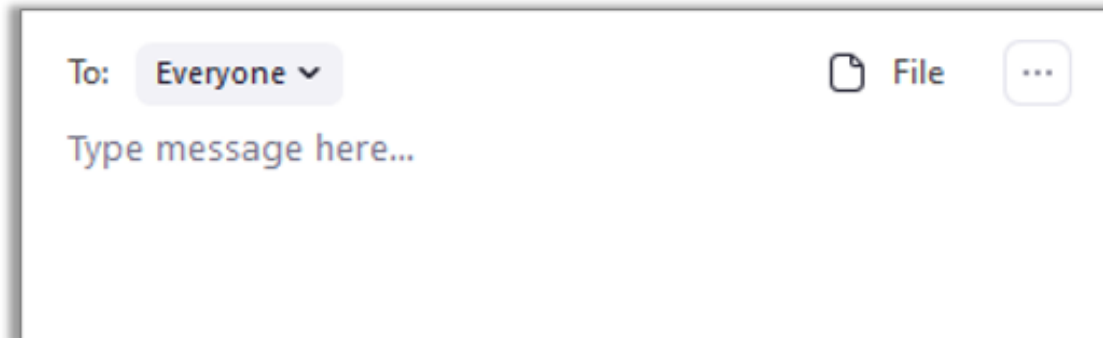
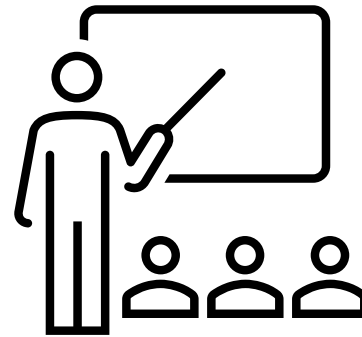
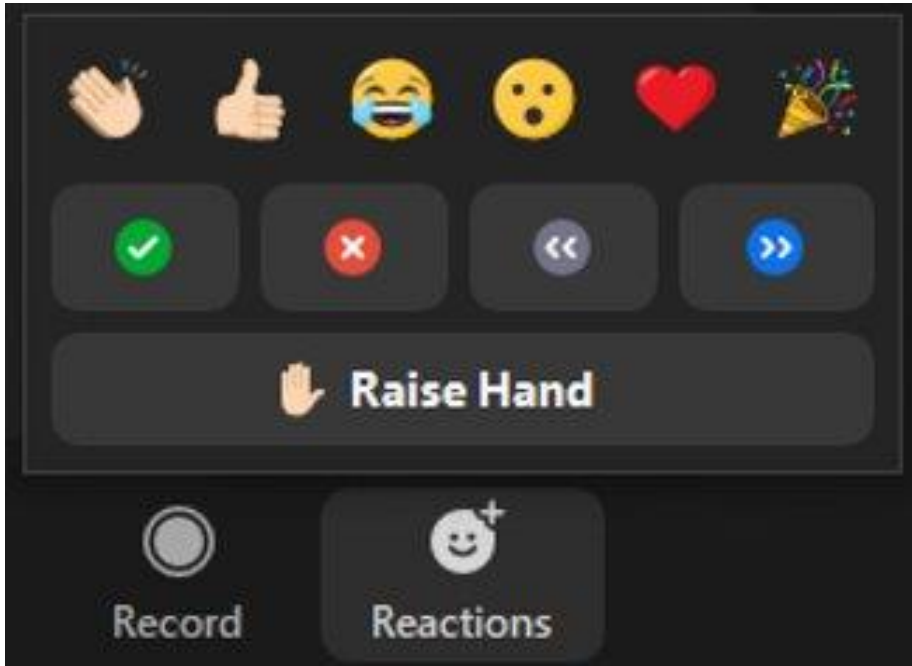


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Webinar Logistics



We appreciate your space and grace in this virtual environment!





Community Standards



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MENTOR MD|DC Community Standards

- Our community is open to ALL - but we also acknowledge the deep-seated racism, sexism, homo and transphobia, misogyny, and ableism that is pervasive in our country. We stand against these isms and actively work to this aim, especially with our youth. This means we must acknowledge that we also approach our work differently and beautifully.
- Share openly. Listen more openly. But be open when your sharing might hurt.
- Be generous with positive assumptions but don't be afraid to ask genuine questions.
- No matter your role here today, be a host.
- We don't endeavor to create safe or comfortable spaces, but rather brave spaces where discomfort can be explored, and beliefs and practices challenged.
- We want this community and experience to be supportive and educational, but also fun! Please bring your full (present) self - it is welcome!
- No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

Kianna Bermudez

- Program Outreach & Support Manager, MD Region
- 6 years working in youth development & mentoring
- Originally from SC, but in Baltimore for 6 years
- AmeriCorps Alum, 2017-18
- 1st generation American-born
- 1st generation high-school and college graduate
- Pronouns: she/her



Introduction: Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Reflect on youth voices and experiences
2. Identify qualities of askable adults
3. Explore skill-building tools for better relationships
4. Practice communication and listening skills

Agenda

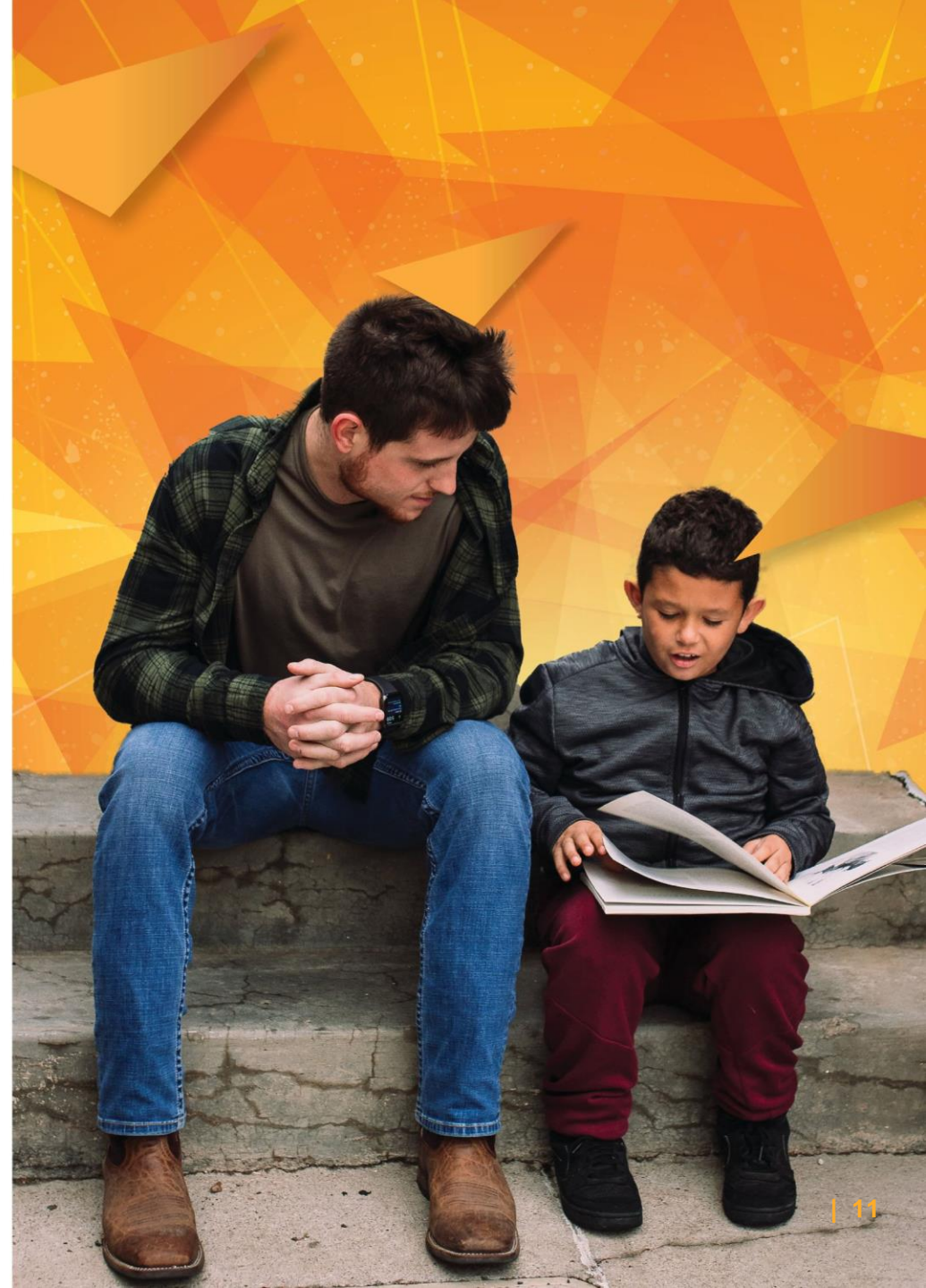
- 1** Welcome and Introduction
- 2** What Makes an Askable Adult?
- 3** Reflecting on Our Experiences
- 4** Four Askable Adult Skills Areas
- 5** Explore Possibilities & Actions
- 6** Resources
- 7** Questions & Open Discussion
- 8** Closing

Introduction: The "WHY"

- Vermont Network's 2017 survey of 584 youth
- Common stressors/concerns:
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Poverty
 - Sexism and harassment
 - Body shaming and bullying
 - Homophobia and transphobia
- #1 solution: having access to more supportive and "askable" adults

What Makes an Askable Adult?

- I. [Maru and Alexa's story](#)
- II. What did you notice?



Dad Nobody
Grandpa
Counselor
Lawyer
Brother Advocate
Teacher
TA Aunt
Parents Mom Grandma
Family Friend Grandparents
Uncle Sister
Dogs Friends
Friend's parents
Sister's boyfriend



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keep it between us know well willing to help
has experience knows stuff **non-judgmental**
good listener **loyal** approachable
not a snitch understand believe can talk to **confidential**
funny won't tell count on not mean
open minded good person keep secrets fun
reverent understands **caring**
listen closely light hearted considerate friendly able to give advice
helpful truthful **trustworthy** eye contact
I know trustable **trust** serious listenable
respects privacy trusts me know you
help solve problems doesn't ask questions **listens**
comfortable asking supportive relaxed
good **honest** trust you **nice** educated
kind sharing a problem respectful
cares doesn't press you
understanding not gonna bust you



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family problems
relationships legal issues
something wrong at home very big issues
sex health what actually happens
friend problems drugs harrasment
real first love questions topics with no judgment how I'm feeling
emotions money problems choices everything
problems at school personal problems
problems sexuality mad boy problems tea sad anything
sexuality sports transgender personal things
whatever life when I'm in trouble
nothing school fighting don't know
bullying dogs gender dysphoria small issues
problems outside of school
sex/healthy something wrong with me
abuse hitting being divorced
life skills things I'm uncomfortable with
depression college alcohol
advice struggles car advice



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What Makes an Askable Adult?

- Definition: Approachable, easy to talk to about any topic
- Characteristics
- Approachability!!!

- Patience
- Consistency
- Respectfulness
- Honesty
- Kindness

- Attentiveness
- Trustworthiness
- Lightheartedness
- Open-minded
- Non-judgment
- Knowledgability

What Makes an Askable Adult?

REFLECTING ON YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

- Did/do you have an askable adult when you were young?
- Who was/is your askable adult?
- What made/makes them askable for you? What did you talk to them about?
- Think about a moment when an adult supported you in a way that felt good to you. What did they do? What was that like?
- If you haven't gotten the support you needed from adults, what would have been/would be helpful for you? How else did/do you find support?

Four Askable Adult Skill Areas

- I. Building trust, affirming relationships
- II. Commit to consistent connections
- III. Commit to caring communication
- IV. Be a curious co-pilot/navigating tricky conversations



Building Trusting & Affirming Relationships

- [Gabriel and his mom Natanya's story](#)
- Let's define it!
 - **Trust is the assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, and integrity of another person or thing.**
 - To trust someone is to feel safe being vulnerable with them. Youth are more likely to come to you with their concerns if they trust you.



Building Trusting & Affirming Relationships

- Tips for Establishing Relationships
 - R-E-S-P-E-C-T principle.
 - Keep things confidential.
 - Check your own agenda.
 - Allow space.
 - Share power.
 - Watch your assumptions.
 - Pause, reflect, and let go of judgment.
 - Keep promises and show up.
 - Don't give up – building trust takes time.



Building Trusting & Affirming Relationships

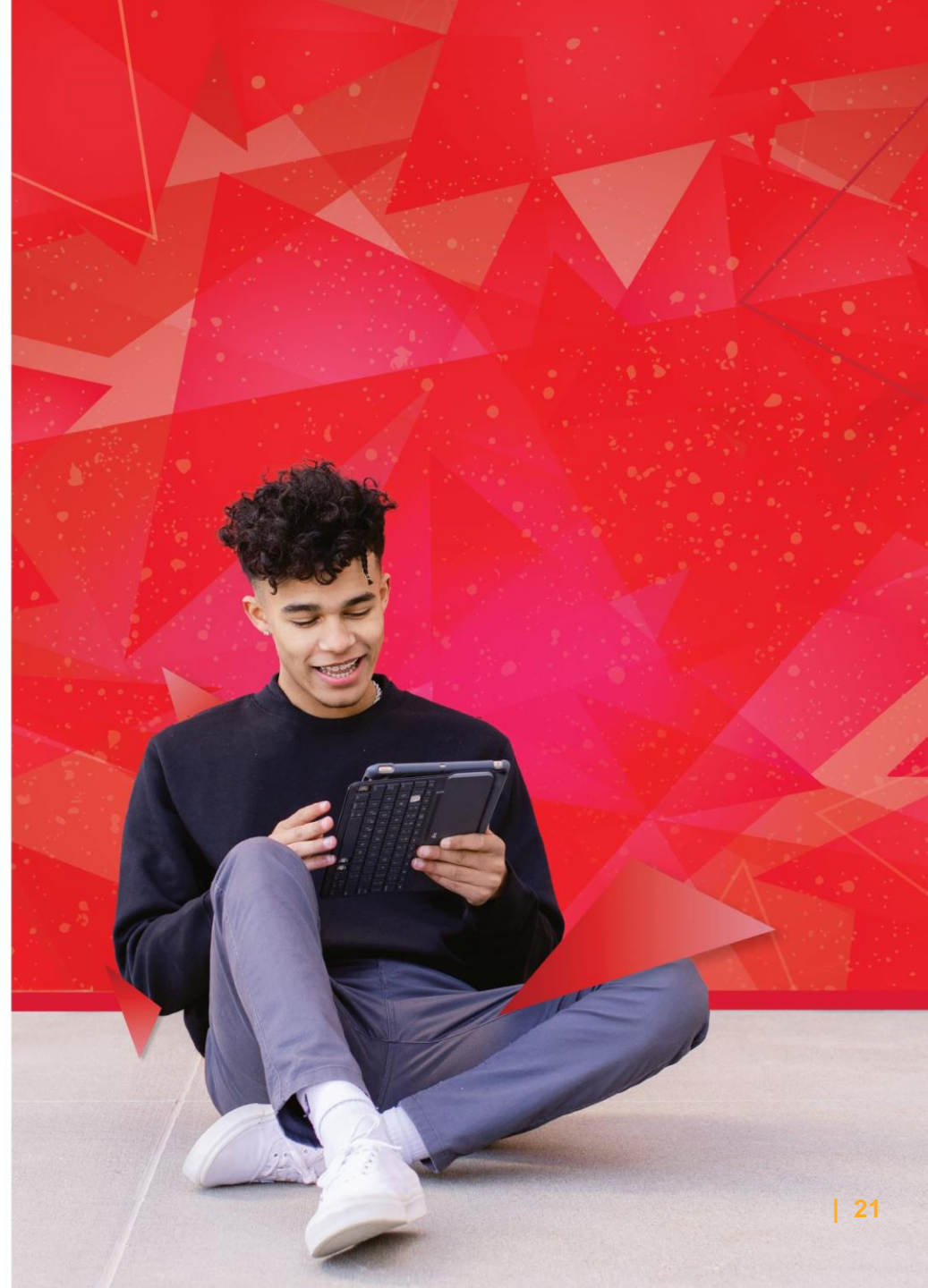
Breakout Reflection:

- What's something that is doable for you to increase your askability?
- What's something that is a "stretch" for you to achieve in order to be more askable?



Commit to Consistent Connections

- I. [Thomas & Laurie's story](#)
- II. What did you notice?



Commit to Consistent Connections

- "You matter to me"
- Importance of connections
- Be consistent, predictable, dependable, and safe.
 - Checking it out for safety
 - Testing limits
 - Genuineness

Commit to Consistent Connections

- Tips for Staying Connected:
 - Pay attention!
 - Follow up
 - Make time for lightness
 - Find satisfaction in doing things for and with them
 - Shift levels of support
 - Don't give up! - consistency matters

A photograph of two women sitting side-by-side, each holding a purple bowling ball. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and floral patterned leggings. The woman on the right has long blonde hair and is wearing a grey sweater and blue jeans. They are both smiling. The background is a blue geometric pattern of triangles and lines. Overlaid on the image is a quote in white text.

**“Do you want to vent or do you want advice?”
Just learning now, after 40 years on earth, that
this might be the most important question to
ask whenever a friend or loved one is upset.”**
- **Jada Yuan, reporter for the *Washington Post***

Commit to Caring Communication

- Tips for Engaging in Caring Communication
 - Put away judgment
 - Ask what they need then listen deeply
 - WAIT! **Why Am I Talking?**
 - Lean in - Be interested and learn
 - Talk about your boundaries and limits
 - Support their processes and remember yours
 - Be a source of appraisal and honesty
 - Understand what's happening in their lives
 - Revisit difficult conversations in small doses
 - Don't give up – communication is an ongoing process

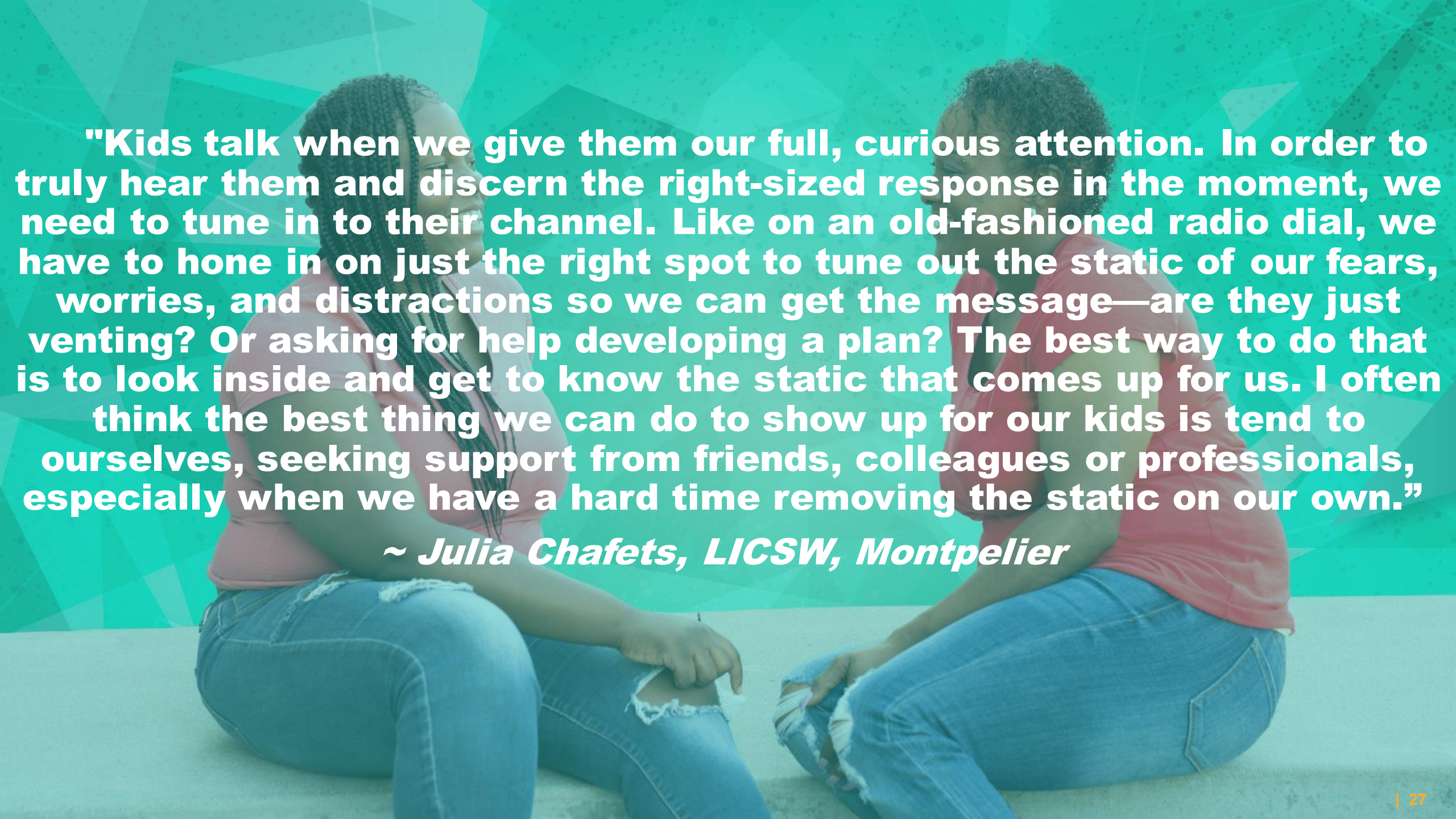


Commit to Caring Communication

WAIT Activity

- Take one – 3-minute conversation:
 - Adult: Tries to get a lot of info to youth about the topic.
 - Young person: Tries to voice their opinion
- Take two – 3-minute conversation:
 - Youth: Talks about the topic.
 - Adult: Only talks 1 minute total out of the 3 minutes. Use a cell phone stopwatch to time how long you talk!



A photograph of two women sitting on a concrete ledge, facing each other and talking. They are both wearing pink t-shirts and blue jeans with a tear at the knee. The background is a teal wall with a geometric pattern of triangles. The text is overlaid on the image in white, bold font.

"Kids talk when we give them our full, curious attention. In order to truly hear them and discern the right-sized response in the moment, we need to tune in to their channel. Like on an old-fashioned radio dial, we have to hone in on just the right spot to tune out the static of our fears, worries, and distractions so we can get the message—are they just venting? Or asking for help developing a plan? The best way to do that is to look inside and get to know the static that comes up for us. I often think the best thing we can do to show up for our kids is tend to ourselves, seeking support from friends, colleagues or professionals, especially when we have a hard time removing the static on our own."

~ Julia Chafets, LICSW, Montpelier

Being a Curious Co-Pilot

- Tips for Becoming a Useful Resource:
 - Be honest and direct
 - It's ok if you don't know the answer to something or know just what to say
 - Break it down
 - Ask helpful questions; youth probably have the answer themselves
 - Think outside the box!
 - Broaden the web of relationships
 - Look up local and other resources together
 - Youth want meaningful conversations and practical information about their concerns. It's ok to Google it!
 - Don't give up – being a resource is ongoing!

family problems
relationships legal issues
something wrong at home very big issues
sex health what actually happens
friend problems drugs harrasment
real first love questions topics with no judgment how I'm feeling
emotions money problems choices everything
problems at school personal problems
problems sexuality mad boy problems tea sad anything
sports transgender life personal things
whatever dogs school when I'm in trouble
nothing fighting don't know
bullying gender dysphoria small issues
problems outside of school
sex/healthy something wrong with me
abuse hitting being divorced
life skills things I'm uncomfortable with
depression college alcohol
advice struggles car advice



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Explore Possibilities and Actions

- [Alex & Sarah's Story](#)
- What did you notice?

Explore Possibilities and Actions

■ Act:

- I will ask _____ how I can be more askable for them
- One thing I'll do to build relationships with youth: _____
- One skill I want to work on: _____
- One topic I will learn more about: _____
- I will ask _____ (adult) to support my accountability to these commitments

Resources

- Ideas on how to talk with young people about drugs and alcohol: parentupvt.org/
- What about sexuality and sex ed? lets-talk.how , advocatesforyouth.org
- Navigating dating and romantic relationships: vtnetwork.org/relationship-status-booklet
- Managing stress at home, school, and everyday lives
 - Youth mindfulness activities: positivepsychology.com/category/mindfulness
 - Search for the Teen Stress Management Plan on healthychildren.org

Questions?



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Thank You



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