

Relationships Matter

Why is this important?

- Relationships matter for wellbeing ([Harvard Study of Adult Development](#)¹) and learning ([Link between wellbeing and attainment](#)², Public Health England).
- There is now a wealth of research on the importance of connectedness in schools and on the specific qualities of in-school relationships that promote effective education. ([Roffey, 2012](#)³).
- Relational learning environments, where high expectations and structure is balanced equally against warmth and support, encourage engagement, improve attainment, and lead to less bullying in educational settings ([ACEReSearch](#)⁴).

Building Strong Relationships

Building relationships is not about being highly skilled in particular techniques or strategies. It's about the simple things ([Public Health Scotland's Top Tips](#)⁵):

- Always give me a warm welcome
- Get to know who I am
- Show me what kindness is and looks like
- Let me know when I'm doing things well
- Be consistent so I know what to expect
- Think before you respond to me
- Be respectful of my rights
- Give me time and space when I need it
- Make sure I know where I can go for help
- Check in with me everyday

Importance of a safe environment and a positive culture

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that until learners physiological, psychological, and social needs are met they will be less motivated to, or unable, to learn, i.e., meeting needs, supports wellbeing, which creates conditions where learning can happen.
- Schools and classrooms should be a safe base (Nurture Principle 2) and trusting positive relationships create a sense of emotional and psychological safety.
- Culture and ethos are key determinants in maintaining positive relationships, i.e., a culture that explicitly values nurturing relationships and provides time, space, and opportunities to build relationships with learners especially those that are less engaged.

Reframing and modelling behaviour

- "See a child differently and you will see a different child", Dr Stuart Shanker
- **Modelling**, based on Social learning Theory (Albert Bandura), suggests that children can learn socially appropriate ways to behave by observing the behaviour of adults and then imitating them. It is therefore essential that adults model the behaviour they want to see in their learners
- **Reframing**, is a technique that helps us shift our mindset and look at a situation from a different perspective. It can help us change our point of view, and potentially help us show more compassion.

Information Note

- **Understanding behaviour**, in terms of attachment, shame, trauma, nurture, and neuroscience, can help us reframe the behaviour of learners and explore potentially supportive interventions.

Whole school relational approaches

- Health and Wellbeing, Personal and Social Education, and Responsibility if All - Curriculum
- Whole School Nurture
- Programmes and practice that recognise and realise children's rights
- Programmes and practice that promotes learner participation
- Restorative approaches
- Trauma-informed practice
- Solution-orientated language or practice
- Compassionate and Connected Communities
- Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme

Additional helpful resources and information

- [Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Educational Settings | Resources | Education Scotland](https://education.gov.scot/resources/promoting-positive-relationships-and-behaviour-in-educational-settings/) [https://education.gov.scot/resources/promoting-positive-relationships-and-behaviour-in-educational-settings/]
- See other related Modules on Sequence of Engagement – 3 R's plus 1, Window of Tolerance, Attunement, Active Listening, & Relational Approaches
- 1. <https://www.lifespanresearch.org/harvard-study/>
- 2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/370686/HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf
- 3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321611929_Positive_Relationships_Evidence_Based_Practice_across_the_World
- 4. https://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2007/3/
- 5. <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/9506/its-all-about-relationships-10-top-tips-infographic-print.pdf>