

# TEAM BUILDING GUIDE

Growing Together as a People-Centered Team

*Relationships*  
**Are**  
*Everything*

What Youth Workers Teach  
Us About Leadership

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## Introduction

This team building guide is a companion to the book *Relationships Are Everything*. It is designed to help your team explore the themes of the book together and apply them to your shared leadership journey. Your team can use this guide while reading the book, or work on it after you finish the book and reflect as a group. The choice is yours. Move through it in the way that feels most meaningful for your team.

This guide is divided into three sections that mirror the three sections of the book. Each section includes activities that encourage thoughtful conversation, shared understanding, and deeper connection as you learn together. These activities help your team explore how you work together, how you communicate, and how you support each other through both the everyday moments and the more challenging ones.

It is helpful for your team to complete this guide in order, since each section builds on the last, but you are welcome to move through the activities in whatever way best supports your team's learning. Type your reflections and group responses directly into this document or capture them in whatever shared format works for your team. What matters most is creating space for honest conversation, collective insight, and meaningful connection as you learn together.

Leadership is a team effort. Even when one person holds the title, every member of the team shapes the experience of the work. When teams learn together, reflect together, and support one another with intention, they create an environment where everyone feels safe, valued, and able to do their best work.

The activities in this guide invite your team to slow down, listen closely, and engage in honest conversation. When a team commits to learning side by side, they strengthen not only their relationships but also the culture that holds their work together.

Use this guide to deepen trust, build shared understanding, and grow your collective leadership. You are creating something important together, one thoughtful conversation at a time.

## SECTION ONE: Cultivate Our Leadership From Within

Every team carries a shared story, even if it has never been spoken out loud. It lives in the experiences you bring, the values you hold, and the way you collectively see the world. When you take time to understand who you are as a team, you strengthen the foundation that makes everything else possible. Leadership does not begin with strategy or structure. It begins with awareness. It begins with the people who choose to show up for each other and for the young people you support.

In *Relationships Are Everything*, you are reminded that leadership starts on the inside. This same idea applies to teams. When you understand your shared identity, your leadership becomes more grounded and more connected.

Youth work teaches that identity shapes behavior. This is true for teams as well. When you understand what drives you, what matters to you, and how your shared experiences have shaped your approach to the work, you can lead with greater clarity and purpose. This section helps your team step back from the day-to-day pressures and look inward. It invites honest conversation about who you are, who you want to be, and what kind of leadership you are building together.

These activities are meant to spark dialogue and deepen understanding. As you explore your team's purpose, values, strengths, and beliefs, you lay the groundwork for trust, collaboration, and collective growth. Leadership grows from within, and this is your chance to cultivate it with intention.

### **Activity 1. Our Purpose as a Team**

The book teaches that purpose is the anchor of leadership. This activity helps your team identify the shared purpose that guides your work together, just as the book encourages leaders to stay connected to why their work matters.

#### **Purpose**

To identify why your team exists and what brings meaning to the work you do together.

#### **Instructions**

Have each person reflect individually, then bring your answers together in a group conversation.

#### **Prompts**

- Why do we support young people?
- What impact do we want to have as a team?
- What moments remind us why our work matters?
- What do we want people to feel when they work with us?

#### **Shared Purpose Statement**

Write one or two paragraphs that describe your team's shared purpose. Keep it simple, honest, and meaningful.

## Activity 2. The Values We Bring

In the book, values shape how relationships grow and how teams function. This activity helps your team explore the values that guide your behavior so you can lead together with alignment and care.

### Purpose

To identify the values that guide your behavior as a team and shape how you treat one another.

### Instructions

Each person lists their top values. As a group, identify themes and choose the ones that best represent your team.

| <b>Personal Character</b> | <b>Relationship &amp; Community</b> | <b>Work &amp; Leadership</b> | <b>Personal Growth</b> | <b>Team &amp; Culture</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Accountability            | Belonging                           | Collaboration                | Awareness              | Teamwork                  |
| Authenticity              | Care                                | Commitment                   | Balance                | Support                   |
| Bravery                   | Compassion                          | Competence                   | Clarity                | Unity                     |
| Calmness                  | Empathy                             | Confidence                   | Curiosity              | Reliability               |
| Change                    | Encouragement                       | Consistency                  | Endurance              | Respect                   |
| Contentment               | Fairness                            | Creativity                   | Flexibility            | Safety                    |
| Courage                   | Friendship                          | Curiosity                    | Forgiveness            | Trust                     |
| Endurance                 | Generosity                          | Decisiveness                 | Growth                 | Understanding             |
| Flexibility               | Gratitude                           | Dependability                | Humility               | Well-being                |
| Forgiveness               | Helpfulness                         | Determination                | Joy                    | Belonging                 |
| Hope                      | Honesty                             | Excellence                   | Mindfulness            | Inclusiveness             |
| Humility                  | Inclusiveness                       | Focus                        | Motivation             | Collaboration             |
| Joy                       | Kindness                            | Innovation                   | Optimism               | Communication             |
| Mindfulness               | Listening                           | Integrity                    | Ownership              | Openness                  |
| Optimism                  | Openness                            | Leadership                   | Patience               | Stewardship               |
| Patience                  | Respect                             | Learning                     | Purpose                | Supportiveness            |
| Peace                     | Support                             | Motivation                   | Resilience             | Accountability            |
| Presence                  | Thoughtfulness                      | Ownership                    | Self-awareness         | Stability                 |
| Resilience                | Trust                               | Purpose                      | Self-care              | Equity                    |
| Self-awareness            | Understanding                       | Quality                      | Self-discipline        | Fairness                  |
| Self-care                 | Unity                               | Reliability                  | Self-expression        | Encouragement             |
| Self-discipline           | Safety                              | Responsibility               | Strength               | Empowerment               |
| Self-expression           | Sharing                             | Service                      | Vision                 | Inclusivity               |
| Strength                  | Sincerity                           | Stewardship                  | Wisdom                 | Compassion                |
|                           |                                     |                              |                        |                           |
|                           |                                     |                              |                        |                           |

## Prompts

- What values guide us when we are at our best?
- Which values help us build strong relationships?
- Which values do we want to practice more often as a team?

## Team Values Charter

List your top three to five shared values. For each value, write one behavior that puts that value into action.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Activity 3. Understanding Each Other

The book emphasizes the importance of seeing people as whole human beings. This activity supports your team in learning each other's stories, strengths, and needs, which deepens connection and strengthens trust.

#### **Purpose**

To help team members see beyond their roles and understand each other as whole human beings.

#### **Instructions**

Each person shares one meaningful moment from their life that shaped who they are today.

#### **Prompts**

- What experiences influence how we show up at work?
- What strengths do we see in one another?
- What do we need from each other to do our best work?

#### **Team Insight Summary**

Write a few sentences describing what your team learned about itself through this conversation.

## Activity 4. Our Team Leadership Mindset

Leadership in the book is described as a way of thinking and being. This activity helps your team reflect on the beliefs that guide your collective actions so you can lead with more intention and unity.

### Purpose

To understand how your team thinks about leadership and the beliefs that guide your actions.

### Instructions

Discuss each prompt as a group. Listen for shared beliefs and meaningful differences.

### Prompts

- What does leadership mean to us as a team?
- What do we believe our responsibility is to young people?
- What do we believe our responsibility is to one another?
- What mindsets help us lead well together?
- Which mindsets do we want to strengthen?

### Examples of Team Leadership Mindsets

**Growth mindset:** We believe we can learn, improve, and adapt together. Mistakes are opportunities for growth, not reasons for blame.

**Service mindset:** We lead with the intention of helping one another and supporting the young people we serve.

**Relationship mindset:** We prioritize trust, communication, and care because we know strong relationships make strong teams.

**Collaboration mindset:** We choose to work together, share ideas, and value every voice.

**Accountability mindset:** We take responsibility for our actions, follow through on our commitments, and support one another in doing the same.

**Curiosity mindset:** We ask questions, explore new ideas, and stay open to learning from each other.

**Empathy mindset:** We try to understand how others feel and what they need so we can respond with compassion.

**Solution mindset:** We focus on what we can do rather than what we cannot. Challenges become opportunities to get creative.

**Purpose mindset:** We stay connected to why our work matters and how our leadership affects young people.

**Resilience mindset:** We stay steady through stress, change, and uncertainty, and we help each other stay grounded.

**Integrity mindset:** We align our actions with our values, even when it is difficult.

**Inclusion mindset:** We make space for all voices, perspectives, and experiences and actively create a sense of belonging.

**Leadership Mindset Map:** Write three sentences that describe your team's shared leadership mindset.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## SECTION TWO: Create Cohesive Connections

Every strong team is built on relationships. Trust, communication, and belonging are not the result of luck. They are the result of small daily choices that signal safety, care, and respect. When team members feel valued and understood, they show up with more creativity, more courage, and more willingness to support one another through the challenges of youth work.

Your team already knows how powerful relationships can be. You see it every time a young person opens up, takes a risk, or grows because someone believed in them. The same principles apply here. As a team, you must create the conditions where everyone feels like they matter. This requires intention, vulnerability, and a shared commitment to understanding one another. The book *Relationships Are Everything* lifts up this truth again and again, reminding us that the quality of our relationships shapes the quality of our leadership.

This section guides your team through conversations that deepen your connections. It helps you explore what trust looks like for you, how communication shapes your culture, and what belonging feels like in your workplace. These activities will strengthen your ability to work together in ways that lift each other up and create a supportive environment where everyone can thrive.

### Activity 5. What Trust Looks Like for Us

Trust is at the heart of every relationship described in the book. This activity helps your team define the trust-building habits you want to practice so your relationships grow stronger and more reliable.

#### **Purpose**

To build shared expectations for how trust is created, protected, and restored.

#### **Instructions**

Discuss each prompt together. Be open and curious about what trust means to each person.

#### **Prompts**

- What helps us trust one another?
- What actions strengthen trust on our team?
- What actions weaken trust?
- How do we want to respond when trust is strained?

#### **Team Trust Agreement**

Write three commitments your team will practice to build and protect trust.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Activity 6. Communication That Supports One Another

The book teaches that communication shapes how people feel about themselves and their work. This activity helps your team reflect on how you speak, listen, and respond so you can communicate in ways that support growth and connection.

### Purpose

To reflect on how your team communicates and to identify habits that support healthier, more effective conversations.

### Instructions

Think about recent moments of clear communication and moments of confusion or stress.

### Prompts

- When do we communicate well?
- What gets in the way of honest or clear communication?
- How do we respond during conflict or pressure?
- What communication habits do we want to strengthen?

### Communication Practices

Choose two communication habits your team will practice this month.

- 1.
- 2.

### Examples of communication habits

**Active listening:** We give our full attention, avoid interrupting, and show that we understand before responding.

**Clear expectations:** We communicate what we need, why it matters, and when it is needed so there is less confusion.

**Speaking with kindness:** We choose words that are respectful and supportive, even when conversations are difficult.

**Checking for understanding:** We pause to make sure everyone is on the same page before moving forward.

**Staying solution focused:** We address challenges by talking about what we can do rather than dwelling on what went wrong.

**Timely communication:** We share important updates and information in a reasonable amount of time so others can take action.

**Using “I” statements:** We express our own thoughts and feelings clearly instead of assigning blame or assuming intent.

**Asking clarifying questions:** We slow down and ask questions when something is unclear instead of making assumptions.

**Providing constructive feedback:** We offer feedback that is honest, specific, and supportive, with the goal of helping one another grow.

**Giving appreciation:** We regularly acknowledge the efforts of others and name the positive things we see in one another’s work.

### **Activity 7. Strengths of Our Team**

The book highlights the importance of recognizing the gifts people bring. This activity helps your team identify your collective strengths so you can rely on one another more intentionally.

#### **Purpose**

To understand the strengths and unique contributions each person brings.

#### **Instructions**

Have each member list their strengths. Share them with the group.

#### **Prompts**

- What strengths does each person bring to the team?
- How are we using these strengths now?
- How could we use these strengths more intentionally?

#### **Team Strengths Map**

Create a simple chart listing each person's strengths and how the team can rely on them.

## Activity 8. Belonging and Culture

Belonging is a central theme throughout the book because it influences how people feel and how teams perform. This activity helps your team explore what belonging looks like and how to create a culture where everyone feels valued.

### Purpose

To identify what helps your team feel safe and included.

### Instructions

Talk openly about what contributes to a healthy team culture and what gets in the way.

### Prompts

- What does belonging feel like for us?
- What supports a sense of safety and openness?
- What behaviors create tension on our team?
- What culture commitments do we want to make?

### Culture Map

List three culture habits your team will practice consistently.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Activity 9. Supporting Each Other During Challenges**

The book shows that relationships become especially powerful during difficult moments. This activity helps your team reflect on how you support each other when work is stressful so you can strengthen resilience and trust.

#### **Purpose**

To strengthen team resilience by identifying supportive behaviors.

#### **Instructions**

Discuss how your team has responded to past challenges and what you want to do going forward.

#### **Prompts**

- How do we respond when the work gets hard?
- What support do we need from one another?
- What habits help us stay grounded?
- How can we show up for each other with more care?

#### **Team Resilience Plan**

List three ways your team will support one another during difficult times.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### SECTION THREE: Leave a Legacy

Every team leaves a mark. It shows up in the environment you create, the culture you nurture, and the impact your work has on young people and colleagues across your agency. Legacy is not something that happens at the end. It is built slowly through the choices you make together, the values you embody, and the care you show to the people around you.

Youth work reminds us that influence is powerful. When your team chooses to lead with purpose, honesty, and compassion, that choice reaches farther than you may ever know. It shapes how new staff learn the work. It influences how young people experience your programs. It sets the tone for what is possible in your agency.

This section encourages your team to think boldly about your collective impact. It invites you to imagine the future you want to create, the culture you want to strengthen, and the change you want to inspire. By reflecting on your shared legacy, you develop a clearer sense of who you are as a team and what you want your leadership to stand for.

This reflection aligns with one of the closing themes of *Relationships Are Everything*, which reminds you that a team's legacy is created through the relationships you build and the care you bring to your work each day.

## Activity 10. Our Collective Impact

The book reminds you that leadership is measured by how people experience you. This activity helps your team reflect on the impact you want to have together and the difference your relationships make in your agency.

### **Purpose**

To reflect on the difference your team wants to make and the lives you hope to influence.

### **Instructions**

Think together about the impact you want to have.

### **Prompts**

- What difference do we want to make in our agency?
- How do we want young people to experience our work?
- What do we hope others say about our team?
- What does meaningful impact look like for us?

### **Team Impact Map**

List the groups, people, or communities you influence and the impact you want to have on each.

### **Activity 11. The Agency We Want to Build**

In the book, culture is shaped by everyday actions and relationships. This activity invites your team to imagine the agency you want to help create and the leadership behaviors that will bring that vision to life.

#### **Purpose**

To clarify how your team contributes to the culture and future of your agency.

#### **Instructions**

Discuss each prompt with honesty and hope.

#### **Prompts**

- What makes a youth-serving agency strong and healthy?
- What qualities do we want to model for others?
- What practices do we want to spread across the agency?
- What future do we want to help create?

#### **Agency Culture Vision**

Write a paragraph describing the agency culture your team wants to help build.

## Activity 12. Creating Meaningful Change

The book encourages leaders to be bold and purposeful in creating change. This activity helps your team identify improvements you want to influence and the collective courage needed to move them forward.

### **Purpose**

To identify one meaningful change your team wants to influence.

### **Instructions**

Choose one improvement that matters to everyone.

### **Prompts**

- What is one change that would strengthen our agency or our work?
- Why does this change matter?
- What is one small action we can take soon?
- Who could we collaborate with?

### **Change Action Plan**

Write a simple plan describing the improvement, why it matters, and one next step.

### **Activity 13. Leading the Field Together**

The book highlights how youth work leaders can move the field toward greater connection and impact. This activity helps your team consider how you can contribute to meaningful change beyond your agency.

#### **Purpose**

To imagine how your team can influence the broader field of youth work.

#### **Instructions**

Explore the larger impact you want to have beyond your agency.

#### **Prompts**

- What strengths does our team bring to the field?
- Where is courageous leadership needed right now?
- How can we help push the field forward?
- What contribution do we want to make?

#### **Field Leadership Commitment**

Write two or three commitments your team wants to take forward.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Activity 14. Our Leadership Legacy as a Team**

The book ends with the idea that your legacy is built through everyday choices rooted in relationships. This activity brings your team's reflections together so you can define the legacy you choose to create together.

#### **Purpose**

To bring your journey together and define the legacy you want to build as a team.

#### **Instructions**

Reflect on all three sections and the insights you gained.

#### **Prompts**

- What did we learn about ourselves as a team?
- What habits and values matter most to us?
- How do we want people to experience working with us?
- What kind of legacy do we choose to build?

#### **Team Legacy Statement**

Write one or two paragraphs describing the legacy your team chooses to create together.

## What I Hope You Take With You

Your team's leadership journey is an ongoing story. Every conversation, every challenge, and every success adds depth to who you are becoming together. By choosing to learn as a team, you have taken a powerful step toward creating a more trusting, supportive, and people-centered work environment.

Your shared commitment will ripple through your agency and into the lives of young people in ways you may never fully see. The impact of a strong, caring team reaches far beyond the walls of your workplace. Keep listening to one another. Keep supporting each other. Keep showing up with heart. Your leadership as a team matters, and the field of youth work is stronger because of you.

## Connect with Me

Thank you for investing the time and energy to grow together as a team. When teams reflect, learn, and support one another with intention, they strengthen not only their work, but also the culture that holds their work together. If questions come up, if you want to go deeper into any activity, or if your team would like guidance as you continue your leadership journey, I would be honored to help.

If you or your team would benefit from more direct guidance, I am available to:

- Deliver keynote presentations,
- Provide leadership trainings, and
- Work with teams to strengthen their culture and connection.

Please feel free to reach out anytime. I am grateful for the work your team does, and I look forward to supporting you as you continue building a strong, people-centered culture together.

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