

## WHAT IS A YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP?

### Adults need to remember these principles:

1. Don't expect more from a youth than you would from another adult. If a young person shows up for a meeting 15 minutes late, an adult might think, "Aha, a slacker." When a fellow adult shows up 15 minutes late, the same person might think, "That's understandable. That person has deadlines and pressures." So do youth.
2. **Treat young people as individuals; don't make one youth represent all youth. Assure young people that you are interested in their individual opinions, and don't expect them to embody an entire population.**
3. Be careful about interruptions when youth are speaking. In many youth–adult relationships, that respect is lacking. Treat youth like you'd like to be treated. Both parties need to respect each other's right to voice opinions without criticism or censure.  
→ Remember that your role in a partnership is not to parent. Although being a parent may be the most important role an adult can play, the purpose of youth–adult partnerships is to give both parties a different way to relate to each other.
4. **It's okay to ask for help when you don't know how to do something.**

### Young people need to remember these principles:

1. **Criticism doesn't necessarily equate to condescension. Sometimes when adults offer criticism to a youth, they are treating the youth the same way they would a colleague. Remember that adults are used to critiquing others' ideas. Just because they disagree, it doesn't mean they are dismissing you.**
2. Adults may not be aware of how capable you are. You can enlighten them by showing them you can handle mature situations.
3. **Adults will feel responsible for the success or failure of the project. That is why it is hard for adults to share power and authority. They need reassurance that you are willing to share in the successes and failures.**
4. It's okay to ask for help when you don't know how to do something.

**\*\* This application MUST be written by youth & the summit MUST be youth-led. That doesn't mean that adults can't help. They just can't take over! \*\***

1. From Building Community: A Tool Kit for Youth and Adults in Charting Assets and Creating Change. Chevy Chase, MD: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development/Tides Center, 2001. p. 135.

2. Adapted from Leifer, L., and McLarney, L., Younger Voices, Stronger Choices, 1997.

3. From Building Community: A Tool Kit for Youth and Adults in Charting Assets and Creating Change. Chevy Chase, MD: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development/Tides Center, 2001. p. 17. © 2003 The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, National Network for Youth, Youth Leadership Institute

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