

## “Relationships” Overview

Click on a topic below to go directly to that section.

[Definition of Relationships](#)

[Relationships Sub-Constructs](#)

[Relationships are Fundamental to a CBA](#)

[Additional Resources Related to Relationships](#)

[Links to Relationships Sub-Constructs](#)

### Definition of “Relationships”

The first three CBA constructs (motivation, self-direction, self-knowledge) have focused on the individual and how we, as individuals, learn and develop. Our fourth construct, relationships, shifts our focus from the individual to the social domain, the self in relation to others and to the world. The following definition is offered for relationships.

### Relationships

- **Relationships, in terms of a CBA construct, are defined as connections between and among individuals**
- **Inter-connectivity , or how individuals and groups relate to each other, are a primary focus of a CBA**

This construct is important because we do not live in total isolation from the influences of others, therefore we need to become proficient in interacting with other individuals and groups. Areas like social interaction and cultural competence are critical traits that can be learned and developed over time in school environments.

The notion of “self-reflection,” our ability to introspectively look at the processes by which we manage our lives and learn, has been a central concept in developing a CBA. This same ability is also essential to this construct, but rather than focusing on the internal processes of single individuals reflecting on themselves, the “self” comes to represent collective selves having the ability to reflect on their experience in order to understand and improve it. These collective selves can be viewed as groups, as organizations, as nations, as peoples or humanity itself. There is a deep need for collective bodies to reflect on how they think and act in the world, assess their worth and seek to improve it. The primary questions to be asked involve how collective selves relate to each other and whether those relationships can be improved and made more productive and meaningful.

### Relationships Sub-Constructs

#### Simply Stated

As a way of getting started, let’s define each of the sub-constructs associated with the Relationships construct in simple terms. Links to each of the Relationship sub-constructs are provided at the end of this webpage.



- **Social Skills.** Individuals live in social contexts. In order to benefit from the social interactions and networks in which we participate, it is important to become skilled in interacting with others. This can take many forms such as communication, cooperation, collaboration, teamwork, group involvement and sharing belief systems. Being skilled in social interaction is one of the central requirements for success in the modern world.
- **Help Seeking.** The ability to seek help is critical to the learning process. Completing challenging learning tasks is inevitably going to require seeking assistance to gather additional information or solve problems. A critical skill that all students should develop is the ability to identify what they know and do not know, and to access experts and people knowledgeable in their fields to guide them through difficult learning tasks. One of the significant benefits of seeking and getting help from others is that it develops one’s own expertise and in time those who at one point needed to seek help become the experts to whom those who need help come for advice and guidance.

- **Critical Consciousness.** The world is filled with oppressive systems where basic human rights are ignored. One only has to listen to the news to see that there are people who are oppressed in this world. Critical consciousness raises our awareness of oppressive systems and commits us to act to change them. Education is a primary tool for helping students understand the structure and consequences of oppression in our midst and learn that it is a human responsibility to work to counteract its influence.
- **Social Justice.** Injustices are evident everywhere in our society and world (e.g., racism, sexism, xenophobia, income inequality) and it is important for school counselors to be aware of the injustices and help student become aware of them and act to resolve them. By focusing on social justice issues and the need to effectively address them, school counselors are helping students mature in ways that help contribute to a just society and the well being of our world.

### Relationships are Fundamental to a CBA

One of the responsibilities of school counselors is to help guide students in developing meaningful relationships that contribute to individual growth and the building of sustainable communities. Research indicates that there is a strong link between social competence and academic achievement. School counseling programs help students understand and build relationships from basic respect of others to working for a more equitable and just world.

To learn and to live effectively requires good social skills. To learn effectively, students need to establish and maintain productive, collaborative, social relationships with teachers and with peers. Students need to learn how to work in classrooms, workgroups and teams to achieve common goals that can be achieved through shared experience. Social skills have also repeatedly been identified as an essential component of work and career success.

Individual achievement needs to be grounded in social interest and a commitment to working to improve one’s local, national and global communities. Otherwise, the pursuit of individual achievement can lead to self-absorption and the unbridled pursuit of self-interest at the expense of others. Consequently, the CBA suggests that all students need to develop the broader social understanding that allows them to recognize current inequities in society and the need for individual commitment to work for a more equitable and just world.

The CBA indicates that all students should develop the ability to understand diversity, recognize inequity and act in ways to promote a more just society. Given the current state of the art, this will require practicing counselors to use the existing research base to develop the effective social justice education interventions. Relatedly, school counseling researchers ought to be involved in researching the effectiveness of these interventions and assessing the value of and benefits associated with students’ participation in social justice education in schools.

### Additional Resources Related to Relationships

The Internet is a wonderful tool for accessing information on just about any topic. It has been invaluable in helping us to identify what research has demonstrated to be strongly related to students’ academic achievement and well-being, and evidence-based practices that provide

concrete examples of how to translate the research findings into meaningful learning opportunities that support student development.



Staying informed about what works and does not work to help students achieve and succeed is one of the defining characteristics of a professional school counselor. Internet search engines can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the topics discussed on the CBA Website. To get you started, here are some additional resources you may find helpful. These resources, however, only scratch the surface of what is available on the Internet or in published books and articles. We encourage you to use search engines to find more resources that will increase your understanding and build your capacity to apply these ideas in your work as school counselors.

### Videos

A Ted Talk by Rita Pierson on “Every kid needs a champion” that discusses the importance of relationships, of students developing positive connections. Follow this link to access the video:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/rita\\_pierson\\_every\\_kid\\_needs\\_a\\_champion?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion?language=en)

### Websites

An Edutopia webpage on “The Importance of Teaching Through Relationships.”

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/importance-teaching-through-relationships-stacey-goodman>

An American Psychological Association’s webpage on “Improving Students' Relationships with Teachers to Provide Essential Supports for Learning.”

<http://www.apa.org/education/k12/relationships.aspx>

H. Richard Milner IV on “Five Easy Ways to Connect with Students.”

[http://hepg.org/hel-home/issues/27\\_1/helarticle/five-easy-ways-to-connect-with-students\\_492](http://hepg.org/hel-home/issues/27_1/helarticle/five-easy-ways-to-connect-with-students_492)

## **Links to the Relationships Sub-Constructs**

Now that you have a general sense of the importance of Relationships to student learning and why they are fundamental to a CBA, it is time to explore the four sub-constructs associated with the Relationships construct. Each sub-construct has its own webpage and can be accessed by clicking on the desired sub-construct hyperlink in the Sidebar to your left. The sub-constructs are listed under the “Relationships” Overview link in the following order.

- Social Skills
- Help Seeking
- Critical Consciousness
- Social Justice

Relationships links will appear in the Sidebar of all webpages as long as you are within the “Develop a CBA” module. “PDF” versions of all these webpages can be accessed from within the respective webpages, and in the “Free Resources” module.