

UNITY IN GROWTH: HARNESSING YOUTH WELL-BEING THROUGH SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS

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Outline

1. Why relationships are so important
2. Sibling relationships as early partners
3. Friends as influential socializers
4. Strategies for promoting youth development



Relationships and Youth Development

Theoretical Foundation of Relationships

Value, significance of relationships grounded in many evolutionary, social, cognitive, and developmental domains

- Relationships Theory
- Family Systems Theory
- Social Convoy Model
- Social Learning Theory
- Attachment Theory

Theoretical Foundation of Relationships

Early
Relationships

Close

Intimate

Bidirectional

Generalize

Why are Relationships so Important for Youth

Relationships are the **social fabric** of the human experience

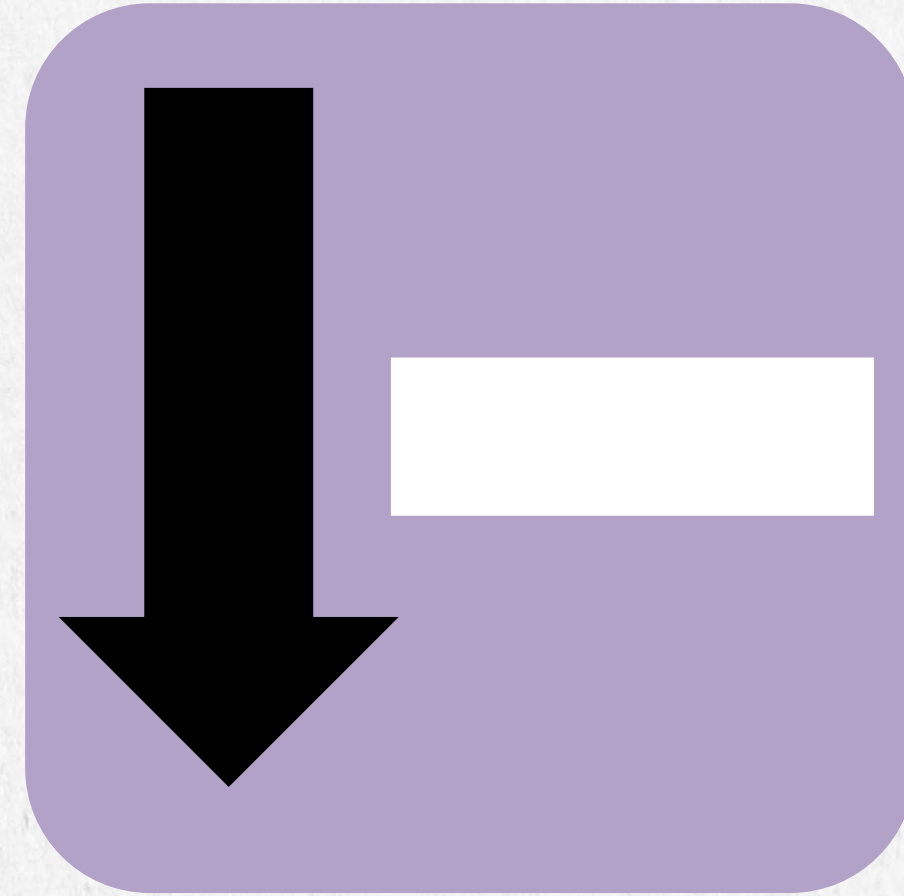
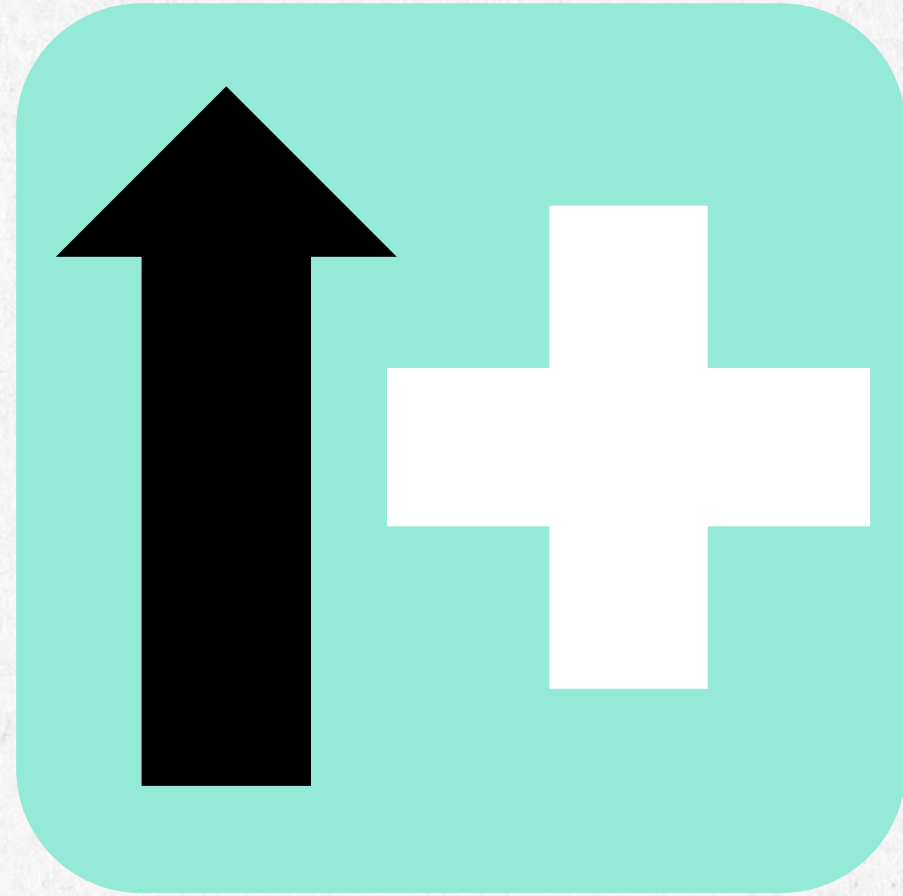
Relationships:

- Teach/Learn
- Support, Uplift

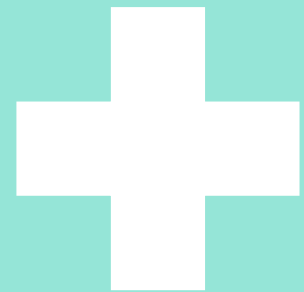
Therefore, what are the benefits that relationships confer that support youth development?



What do Healthy Relationships Look Like?



Common Benefits and Drawbacks of Relationship Quality



Support
Affection
Nurturance
Companionship
Intimate Disclosure
Security*
Trust*



Conflict*
Antagonism
Criticism
Exclusion
Pressure
Dominance



How do youth relationships with siblings and friends support mental health and development?



Sibling Relationships



~80%

Global population has at least
one sibling.

72%

Canadian youth under 15 years
of age live with at least one
sibling.

The Sibling Relationship

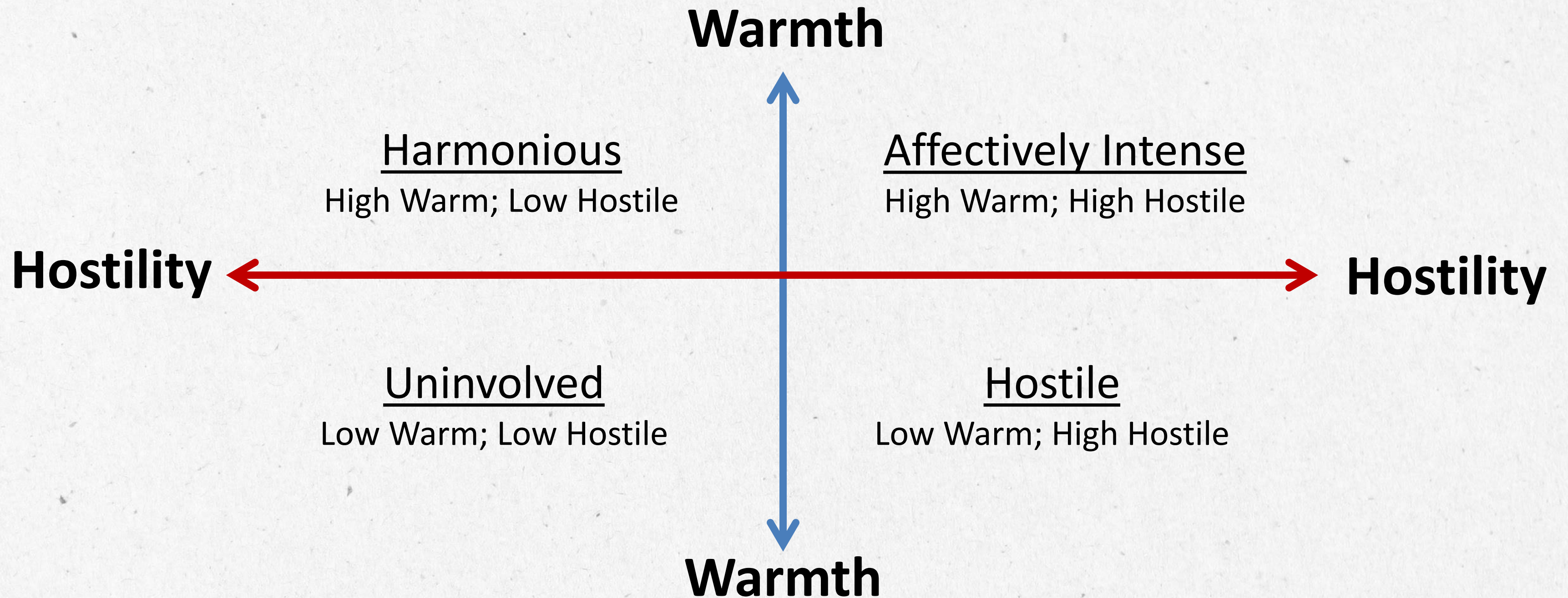
Involuntary

Unending

Varied Relationship Quality

Complementary, Reciprocal
Interactions

Types of Sibling Relationships





Siblings as First Socializers

Siblings are recognized as our first:

- Play partners
- Teachers
- Combatants



Sibling Relations from Childhood to Adolescence

Teen sibling relationships are **more equal, less intense**

Siblings **less** mutually involved during adolescence

But, still go to each other for support, advice





Positive & Negative Sibling Interactions

Positive interactions that promote healthy individual, relational development:

- Playing
- Teaching
- Communicating
- Problem Solving

Negative interactions (i.e., conflict) increases risks, and linger

Trust between Siblings

Belief that what others say and do can be relied upon

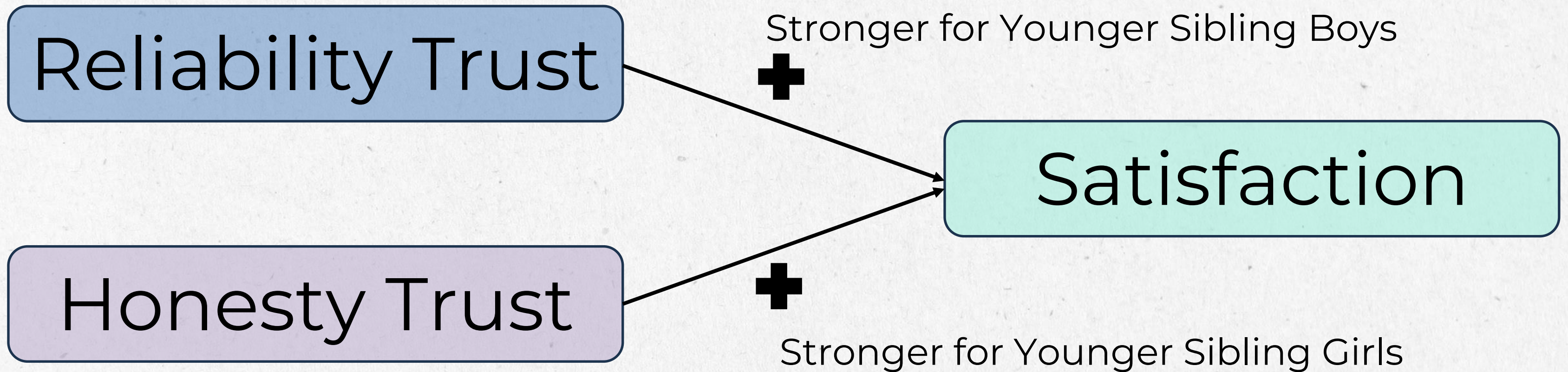
Rooted in healthy relationships

Important for how youth manage through difficult situations and obstacles

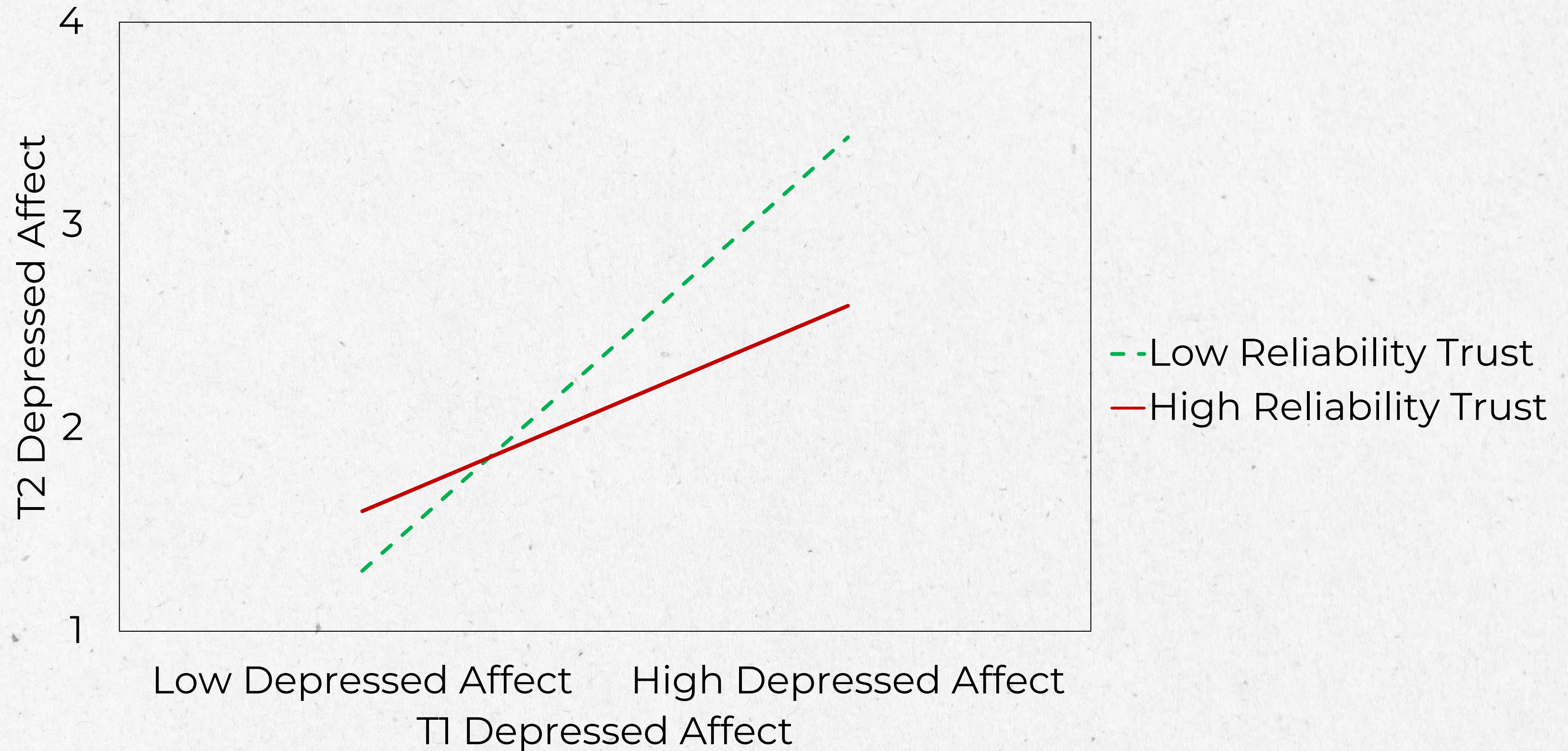
Reliability Trust

Honesty Trust

Sibling Reliability Trust and Relational Satisfaction



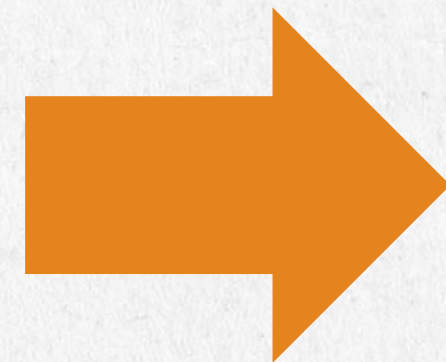
Sibling Reliability Trust and Depressed Affect



A Caveat about Positive Sibling Interactions

Sibling Training Hypothesis

Teach, Model



Collusion

Sibling Relations as a 'Training Ground'

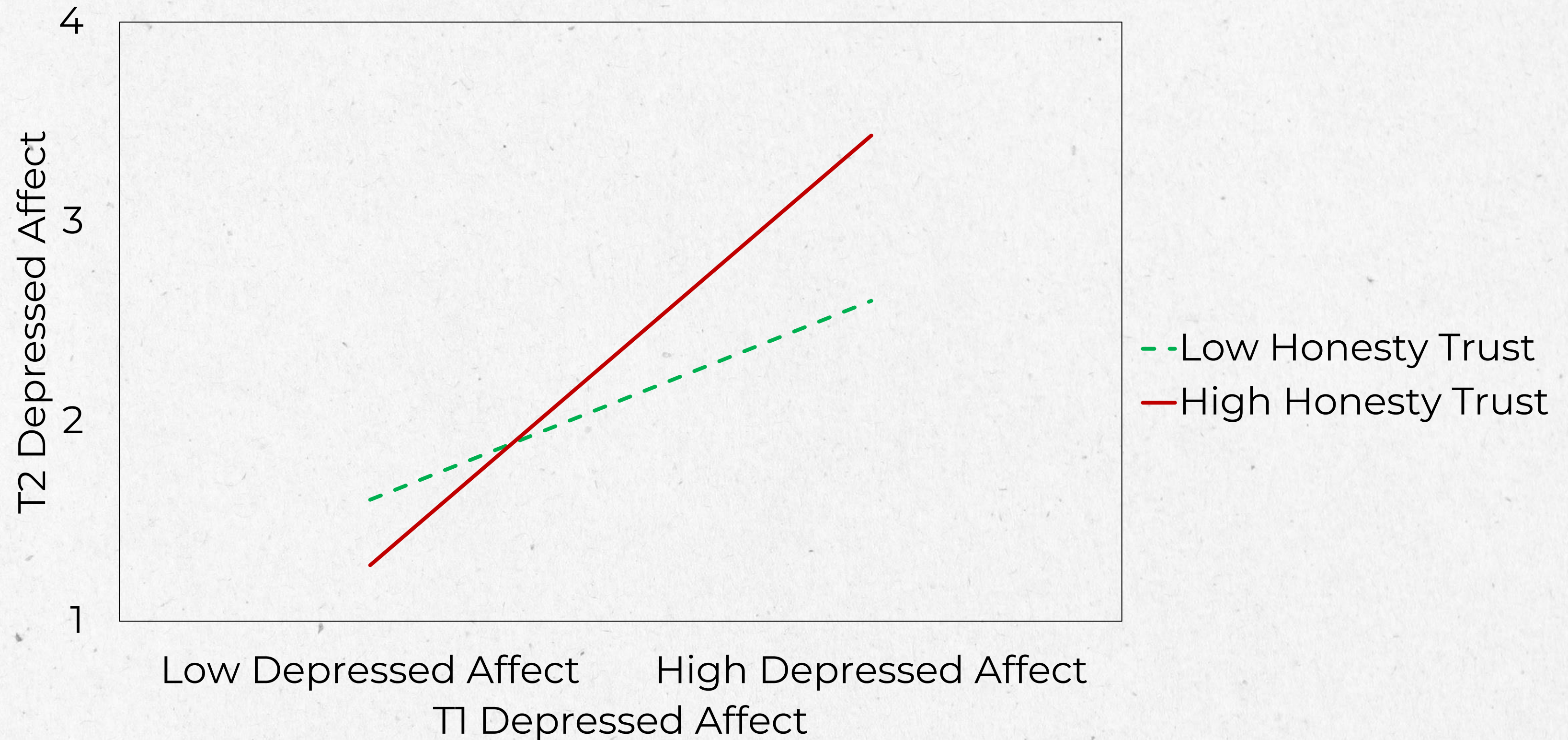
A Caveat about Positive Sibling Interactions

Positive interactions can also be **risk markers**

High-quality sibships for youth can exacerbate:

- Antisocial, delinquent behaviours
- Adjustment difficulties

Sibling Honesty Trust and Depressed Affect



Key Takeaways

1

Sibships as *many firsts*

First play partners, first teachers, first support systems, first opponents

2

Positive sibling relationships

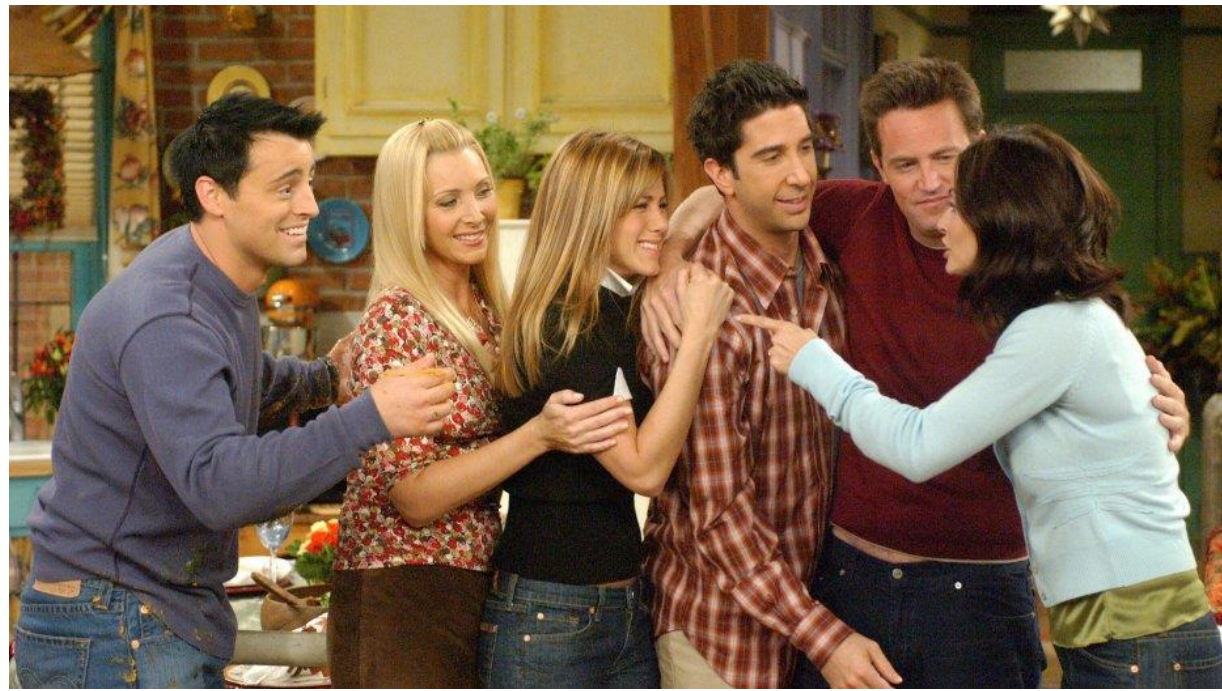
Fosters trusting, supportive cohesive relationships

3

Even the positives can also be risky

Positive interactions can also be a training ground for delinquency, distress

Friendships



Characteristics of Friendships

Voluntary

Can be Ended

High Relationship Quality

Reciprocal Interactions



Friendships from Childhood to Adolescence

Teen friendships are **more intimate**

Relationship where **trust, loyalty**
are valued, beyond mutual liking,
similar interests

Important social support systems
outside of the family





Friendship Quantity or Quality?

Is it **quantity** or **quality**?

Quantity of friends:

- Reducing loneliness but not necessarily enough

Quality of friends:

- Experiences that support belonging may matter more

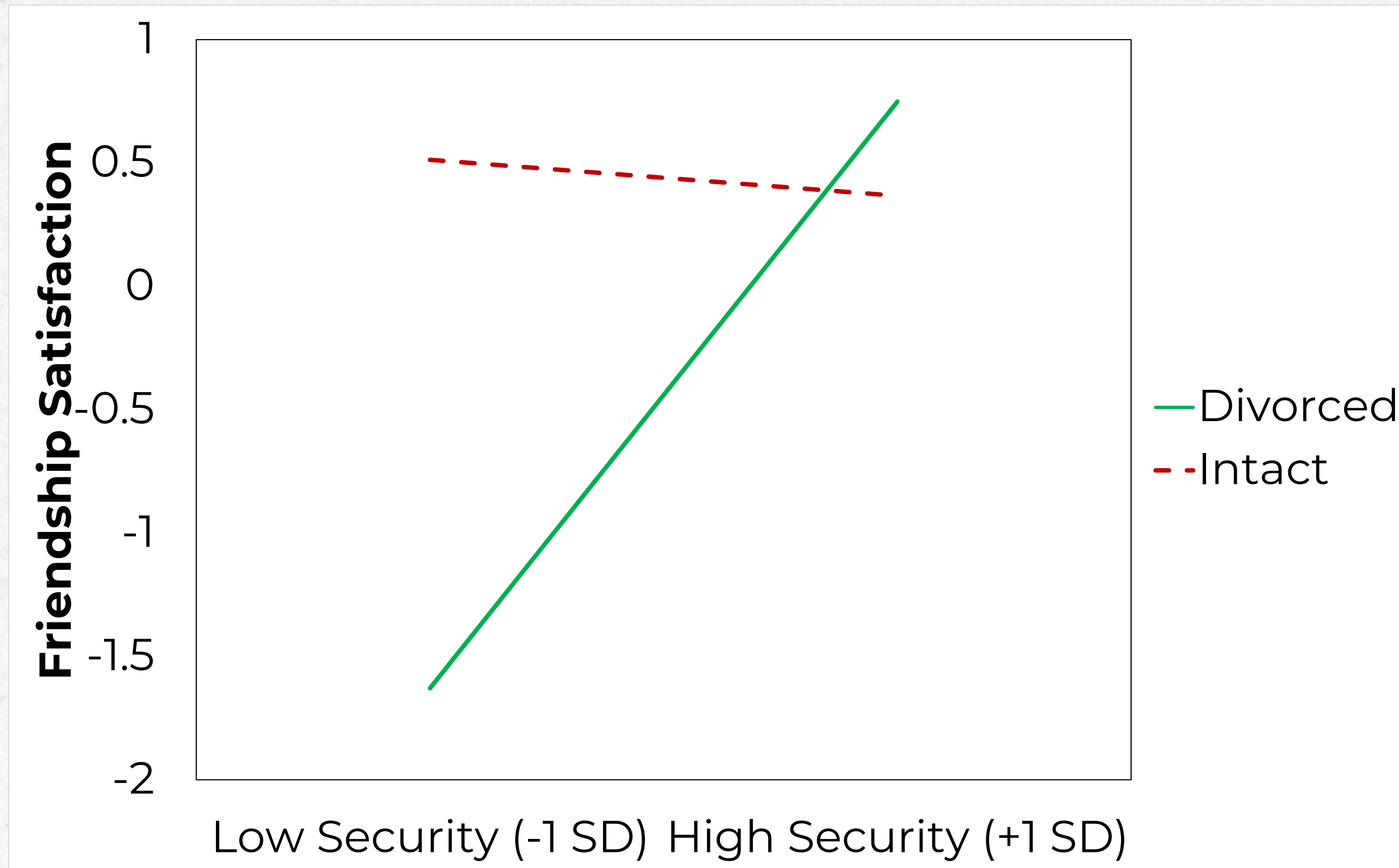
Friendship Quality and Youth Well-Being

Positive experiences are **protective**

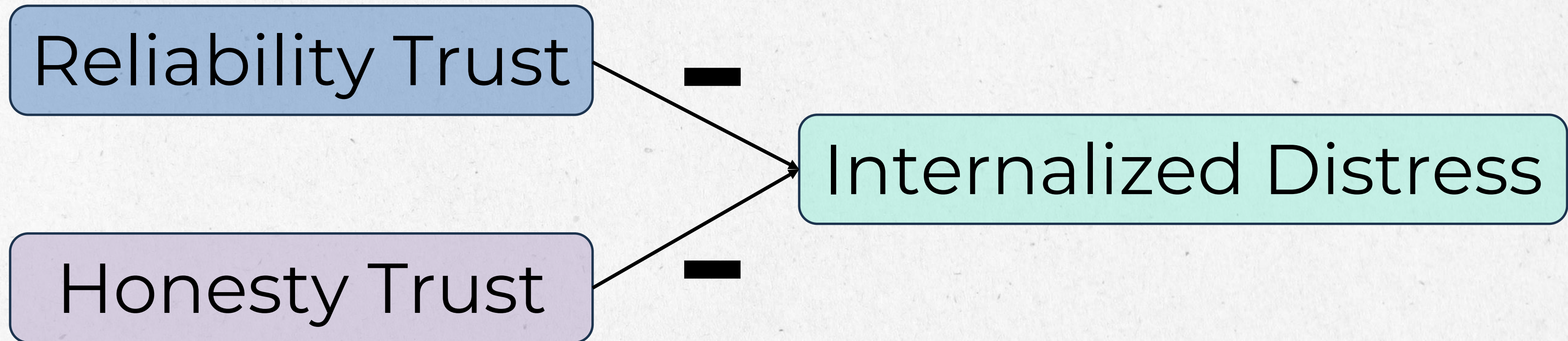
High-quality friendships, as highlighted by feeling secure, trusting, supported linked to:

- Fewer depressive symptoms
- Less anxiety
- Satisfied friendships

Friendship Security and Satisfaction



Friendship Trust and Depressed Affect



Negative Friendship Experiences

Negative features may be more prominent

Negative friendships can **linger longer** than positive ones

This can exacerbate:

- Internalized distress
- Relational satisfaction

Key Takeaways

1

Friendships as first supports *not* at home

First support systems that are not parents, siblings

2

Friendship quantity vs. quality

Quantity is useful, but quality more impactful

3

Positivity = Protective; Negativity = Salient

Positive friendship quality a powerful buffer, but negativity can linger

Siblings & Friends:
Different, but also
Similar

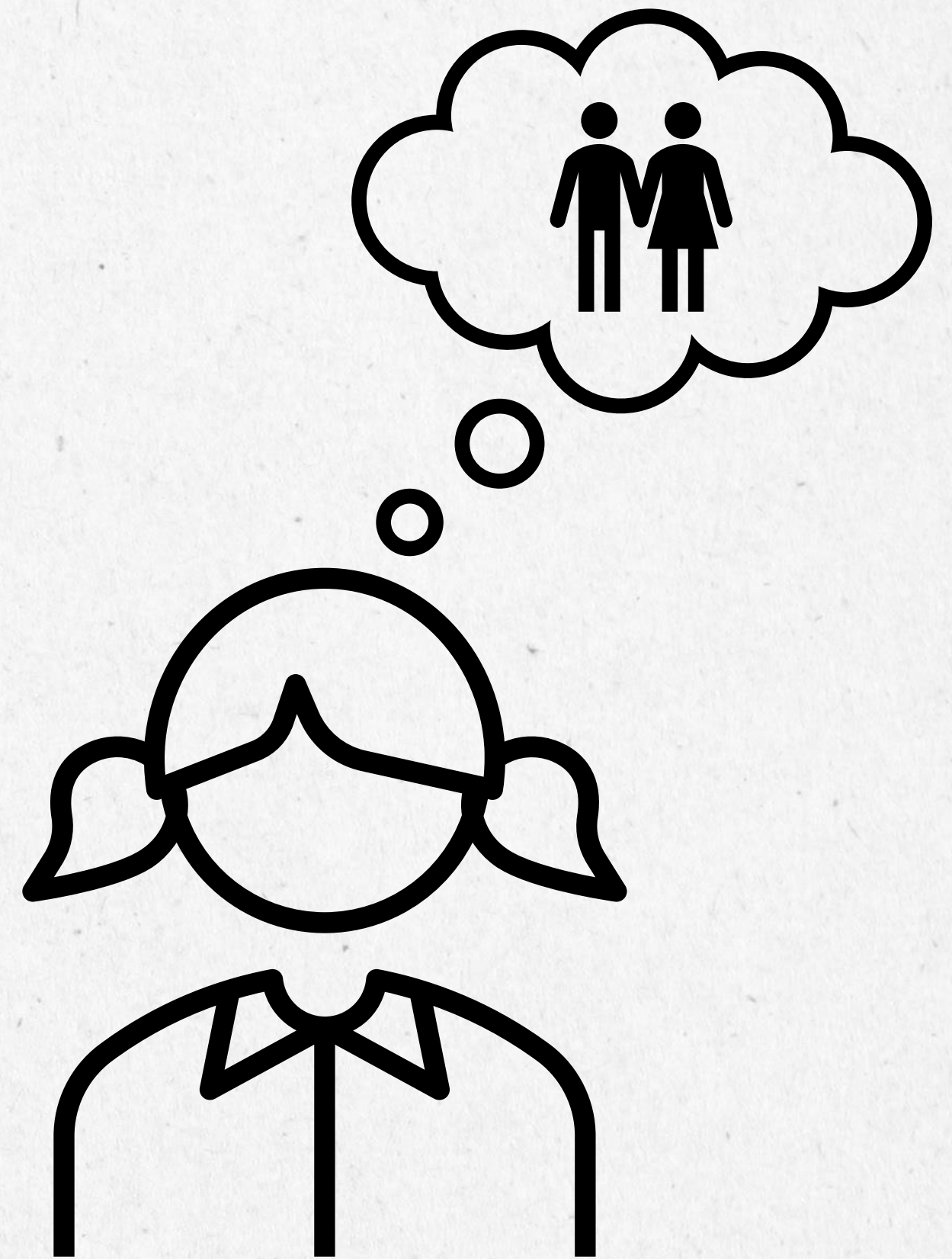
Siblings and Friends: Different, yet Similar

Sibling relationships are a unique relationship

However:

- Qualities of relationships
- Perceptions of those relationships

Similar across both relationships



Similarities in Sibling and Friendship Quality

Pre-COVID-19

> 50%

**Harmonious
relationships**

During COVID-19

> 80%

Healthy
Sibships

+

Healthy
Friendships

=

Healthy Youth

Promote the Positives

Play

Teach

Positive engagement
Cohesion
Trust
Security
Support
Social-Emotional Understanding
Form Positive (or neutral) Attributions





Reduce, not Negate, the Negatives

Conflict Management

Conflicts are **normal**

Don't **avoid** – know the difference in types
of conflicts

No conflicts are just as unhealthy

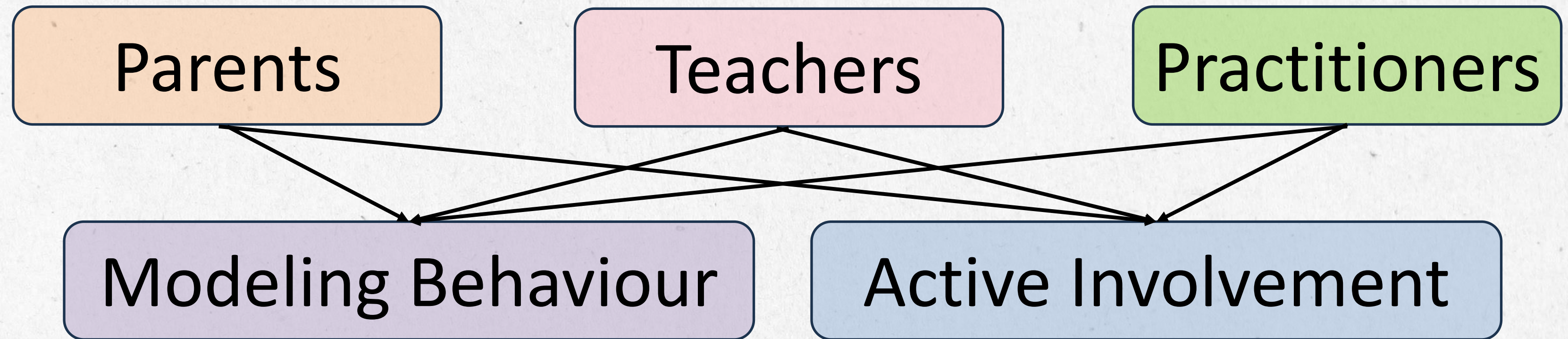
Constructive

Not very intense
Focuses on one issue
Negotiate, compromise
Everyone wins
Does not significantly hurt the relationship

Destructive

Very intense
Spreads beyond initial problem
Coercion – win/loss
Not everyone wins
Can negatively impact the relationship

It Takes a Community



Final Takeaways

1

Healthy Relationships start at home

Helps us understand the links between our thoughts, behaviours, & actions

2

Siblings *and* friends play important roles

Each have a unique role to play, but both complement each other

3

Be aware of the positives *and* negatives

Boosting positive experiences or negating negative ones are not enough

Acknowledgements

ASPIRE Lab (TMU)

Charlotte Leon-Williamson, Ashley Maharaj, Gerly Ngyema Nang, Aaron Palachi, Samantha Gauvreau, Patricia Forbes

LERID Lab (Concordia) – Dr. William Bukowski

Early Childhood Lab (Concordia) – Dr. Nina Howe

RAD Lab (Concordia) – Dr. Holly Recchia

CASC Lab (McGill) – Dr. Melanie Dirks

SED-RG Lab (McGill) – Dr. Chiaki Konishi


Bully Lab (Queen's) – Dr. Wendy Craig



**Toronto
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Québec 
Fonds de recherche – Nature et technologies
Fonds de recherche – Santé
Fonds de recherche – Société et culture

Concordia University Research
Chair in Early Childhood
Development and Education

 Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada 

 Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



Thank you
very much!

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