

PG (PARENTAL GUIDANCE) [p a r e n t s]

THIS WEEK

As your youths get older, they'll grow away from their parents and form their own identities. Most of them probably have already! This can cause some stress and rebellion at home. Parents sometimes come off as old-fashioned and too strict. This TalkSheet will help you discuss parent-teen relationships with your kids in a positive way—and hopefully help them see that parents are people, too!

Your kids may come from different types of families, including divorced homes, one-parent families, or foster homes. Be extra sensitive to this as you go through this session. Don't assume that all your kids have traditional two-parent homes.

OPEN

On a large sheet of poster board or on a whiteboard, have your kids write down some things that they'd change about their parents if they could. Jumpstart them if they need ideas—things like “give me more freedom”, “don't force me to take piano lessons”, and so on. If they don't want to get specific, that's okay.

On a second poster board, have your kids write down some things that their parents would like to change about them—their kids. Keep your kids on track—you might have a kid who writes, “nothing, I'm perfect,”

Now compare the two lists. Point out that both parents and kids have faults and make mistakes—they are all humans! And, point out that parent-child relationships are two-sided—parents and kids will see things differently and that's okay. Remind them that respect is the key issue when dealing with parents. After all, they are being fed, clothed, driven, and paid for by their parents!

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Make a master list of positives and negatives of parents or guardians for them to see. What does the group as a whole like the most and least about parents?
2. Where do your kids think the relationships with their parents are going? Some kids don't think it's cool to get along with their parents, others do. Maybe tell them a few things about your relationship with your parents (when you were younger, of course). Once they have shared, brainstorm different ways in which they can improve their relationships with their parents
3. Let your kids share their opinions, but don't let this turn into a gripe session. No parent is perfect. Why did your kids give the answers they listed?

4. Talk about each of these problem areas and watch for the ones where the most frequent response is true. Stop and ask the kids they could change their situation. For instance, how can they earn their parents trust? What are some steps they can take to communicate better with their parents?

5. Ask the kids to read these passages and discuss ways how these verses can be put into practice in their parent-teen relationships. What advice would God have for them?

THE CLOSE

Emphasize that most parents want the best for their kids. They've invested a lot in their kids' lives and care a great deal about them. Parents may not be perfect, but they're the only parents your kids have. God gave our parents to us and we need to be thankful for them.

Encourage your kids to see their parents as people, not just parents. Remind the group that God commands them in Exodus 20:12 to honor and obey their parents, even when they don't feel like it. This command—one of the Ten Commandments—comes with a promise, too. They won't regret loving and honoring our parents.

Finally close with a prayer for everyone's parents and give thanks for them. Give the kids a few moments to pray silently for their relationships and struggles with their parents.

MORE

- Give your kids a parent quiz to do over the next week. To answer the questions, they'll have to talk with their parents to find out the answers. A few good questions to include are—How old were your parents when they first started dating? Where did they go on their first date? What were their majors in college? How did they feel when you were born? How did they celebrate their first anniversary?
- Or invite the parents to your meeting for a broad discussion-type Q & A session. Split up the room with parents on one side and kids on the other. Present some real-life scenarios and have the parents defend their sides to the kids and vice versa. Some situations may include breaking curfew, regulating TV shows and movies, a parent seeing a kid on a questionable Web site, etc. Your parents and kids will have different views among themselves, but it's a great way for your kids to understand their parents more (and vice versa!).