

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

TWO-WAY TALK

Topic: Parent/Child Communication

Purpose of this Session:

It's trite, but true—communication is the key. It's no secret that without healthy communication, family life becomes strained. Children and youth workers are in an ideal position to support and encourage family communication. Take this time to reinforce the all-important, parent-kid talk that makes families work.

To Introduce the Topic:

For many kids, the traditional family is only a reality on *Leave It to Beaver* television reruns. This introductory activity gives you a group picture of the makeup of your kids' families. Ask the students to help you create a list of all the adults who are parents with whom they live or visit. Below is a sample of a typical list. Write the list on a chalkboard or on newsprint for everyone to see.

Birth mother	Birth father
Big brother	Big sister
Grandmother	Grandfather
Stepmother	Stepfather
Parent's boyfriend	Parent's girlfriend
Guardian	Foster parent

The Discussion:

Item #1: Today's kids don't have as many opportunities to talk with their parents as past generations had, but many kids report that they want more communication. Explore with the kids why they responded the way they did.

Item #2: Let the students share their memories and explain why they remember them as good. Ask how they can make these memories happen again.

Item #3: Briefly discuss each of these issues. Answer the question, "Why is this an important issue that needs to be discussed with a parent?" Examine why kids want some of these issues to be discussed less. For example, during a discussion using this TalkSheet, a fifth grader reported he wanted to talk more about his problems and less about his mother's. His mother had been divorced twice and was at the time living with her boyfriend and her son. According to this young man, she was dumping her problems on him. There was a role reversal in this family. This boy was able to get support and encouragement through the TalkSheet discussion.

Item #4: Support the kids as they share the struggles and frustrations they have experienced talking with their parents. Ask the group to offer suggestions to the problems kids report.

Item #5: Read aloud Ephesians 6:4a. This command to fathers emphasizes that family communication is a two-way street. Explain that kids have control over their part of that two-way communication. Encourage them to do their part.

To Close the Session:

Have the kids form a circle. One at a time, ask the kids to commit to the group to go home and talk with their parents about one of the issues from Item #3. Have volunteers role-play how they might do this. The kids can use your discussion time as an excuse to bring up the subject with their parents. They might tell their parents that they have an assignment to talk with them about the future, God, questions about sex, or whatever topic they choose. The group members can help each other think of questions to ask their parents to get the conversation going. At your next meeting, kids can report on their conversations with their parents.