

1. Parenting Adolescents

At a Glance...

Parenting adolescents can be both challenging and rewarding. Sharing experiences with other parents can provide information and support.

Time Required

30 - 45 minutes

Core Concepts

- Parents will be able to identify the rewards and challenges of parenting adolescents.
- Parents will be able to identify strategies for parenting adolescents.

Objective

- Parents will evaluate their perceptions of parenting adolescents.

- Parents will review strategies for parenting adolescents.

Materials

- Scissors
- Markers
- Construction paper (cut into rectangular strips approximately 3 in. x 11 ½ in.)
- Tips for Parenting During Adolescence handout (A-1-a)

Lesson Overview

1. Activity #1: Bumper Stickers
2. Activity #2: Parenting Tips

Facilitator's Script



Activity #1: "Bumper Stickers"

When we're riding along the highway, we often see bumper stickers on cars and trucks. The slogans on the bumper stickers can often tell us something about the owner of the car.

For example, "Don't sweat the small stuff" may mean the owner is an optimist or someone not easily stressed out. If you see the bumper sticker "My other car is a broom", you might think that the owner is not the happiest person, maybe "has an attitude", is moody, or possibly is mean.

I want you to pretend that you have to design a bumper sticker for your car that tells how you feel about being the parent of a teen. What would the bumper sticker say?

Here are a few examples: "Teen Life Crisis", "Adolescence: We're Going Through It Together", or "Proud Parent".

Give parents construction paper, scissors and markers so that they can design their bumper stickers. Give them time to work on the project.

1. Have parents share their designs with the group.
2. Have parents discuss what their bumper sticker slogan means. Why do they feel the way they do about being the parent of a teenager?
3. Discuss how their perception can affect their parenting and how well they relate and communicate with their teen.

Activity #2: "Parenting Tips"

Being the parent of a teenager is not the same as being the parent of a younger child. Teens are going through many changes physically, emotionally and socially. Let's take a look at this handout, titled "Tips for Parenting During Adolescence".

Distribute "Tips for Parenting During Adolescence" (A-1-a). Go around the room and have each participant read one of the tips. Indicate that in future lessons you will review these points in more detail.

Tips for Parenting During Adolescence

- ◆ Educate yourself about adolescent development. The more you know about the changes that your child will go through, the better you may be prepared for some of the challenges that may come. And you will be able to answer your child's questions.
- ◆ Talk to your children early about the changes they will experience during adolescence. This will help them to better deal with the changes when they occur.
- ◆ Create an atmosphere of honesty, mutual trust and respect. This will lead to better communication, and your children will be more likely to seek answers to their questions from you rather than from peers or media.
- ◆ Put yourself in your child's place. Don't forget what it was like to be a teenager. Sharing your experiences as a teen may help your teen feel you understand and that it is normal to experience changes in feelings and emotions.
- ◆ There will be conflict with your teens, so pick your battles. Don't nit-pick about everything. You will disagree at times. Ask yourself, "Is the battle worth fighting? Is your teen going to be harmed? Does this situation go against your family values?"
- ◆ Maintain your level of expectations for your teen. Don't write off negative behavior with "He's just a teenager". Continue to teach basic responsibility.
- ◆ Stay informed. Know your teens' friends and keep track of their activities. Be aware of issues affecting teens. Do you know who your teens' friends are and what they like to do? Make sure that these activities don't harm them or anyone else.
- ◆ Know the warning signs when risky behavior becomes dangerous behavior. When your teens do things that can harm themselves or someone else, seek help from a professional. Know what behaviors are normal for your teen and when something is wrong.
- ◆ Respect your teen's privacy. You have a right to know what is going on with your teen, but give him or her a little space. Your teen may not want to share everything with you.
- ◆ Set boundaries and make rules that are appropriate. Give your teen more responsibility and room for independence and assertiveness.