



HELPING TEENS NAVIGATE PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Setting the Stage for Your Workshop

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INTRODUCTION

Every group using this lesson will be slightly different, as will the skills and experience of each facilitator. For those new to the task, here are some basics that will help you. For those with experience, these basics serve as a reminder.

TWO KEY PRINCIPLES

Two key principles for facilitating a “Teen Talk” workshop are:

- Assume that all parents love their children. See our definition of ‘parent’ and ‘family’ below.
- Begin where parents are.

Parenting style and practice usually are based on how the parent was parented and what he or she experienced in the family of origin. As parents develop their own way of parenting, they usually compare new ideas to their own experience, and then go through a process of accepting or rejecting both the old and the new. Through self-examination as well as group discussion, they will keep what worked for them but will also look at what might work better with their children in today’s world.

GROUP PURPOSE

Always consider carefully the purpose of the group. When parents sign up for a discussion-style group, they are expecting to experience discussions. If you are asked to do a presentation for a group, those attending will expect you to present information and to have less opportunity for discussion and interaction.

GROUP SIZE

Discussion and activities can work very well in a group of just three to five parents. However, you will need to decide if a minimum number of participants is necessary to justify holding group sessions. In the following lesson materials there are suggestions for working with various group sizes. As groups get larger, perhaps 12 or more, it is more difficult to include everyone in the discussion.

With a larger group, consider covering the topic by using the PowerPoint presentation. For activities, divide the large group into two or three smaller groups. The smaller the group, the more people will talk and share opinions.



THE ROLE OF FACILITATOR

Facilitation means setting the stage in the best possible way. One of your roles as facilitator is to thoroughly prepare for instructing the group. This includes working out the logistics for the group. It also includes careful consideration of who will be in the group. You don't have to be the "expert." Even when you want to give participants the "answer," it may be better to help them discover the information themselves through discussion, or to offer resources to aid that discovery. You can also encourage participants to be resources for each other. Your role includes keeping the group on track, being inclusive, and maintaining an atmosphere of respect.

WHAT WE MEAN BY 'PARENT' AND 'FAMILY'

No matter what level of experience you have as a facilitator, it is important to think about who is in your group. While the terms parent and parents are used in the lesson, we recognize that children are raised in diverse family structures with two biological parents, one biological parent, stepparents, grandparents or other relatives, foster parents, and adoptive parents. For this lesson, a "parent" is defined as any adult caregiver.

We also use the term "family." This lesson allows participants to define family within their cultural frame, values, and lifestyle. Family might be a nuclear family, extended family, non-related kin, a Hmong clan, or even one's street block.

As you think about your group, consider:

- The kinds of parents (and caregivers) you may have and how their needs may differ.
- The different family forms and how that affects the degree and kind of support the parent(s) may receive. For example, is extended family a part of the picture?
- The diversity you may encounter. People differ in socioeconomic status, culture, age, experience, rural-suburban-urban orientation, gender, and family background.
- Will your group include teens? The facilitator's guide has suggestions for how to include them. When small group discussion is suggested, having two parent/teen pairs work together may make it easier to discuss difficult issues. Make sure that teens have the opportunity to speak and that discussion is not dominated by parents.

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

- Prepare for the topic by reading the facilitator's guide. It contains a summary of what is included in the lesson (including handouts), a list of supplies you will need, and what you need to read and review ahead of time.
- Prepare a class list or develop some method to record participation, according to your needs.
- Note ideas in the facilitator's guide for welcoming participants and prepare to encourage sharing once the class begins. Consider what might work best for your group.
- Set up the room early so you don't have to be involved in last-minute preparations as people arrive.
- If the group size and room arrangement permit, arrange chairs in a circle so people can see each other. This encourages sharing and discussion.
- Display a welcome sign with the name of the workshop on the outside door. You may want a welcome message inside the room, too. Music, pictures, posters, or quotes might also be used.



- Although not essential, you may choose to have beverages or other light refreshments available. If you are meeting for more than one session, let participants decide if they want refreshments. You could suggest that group members take turns providing refreshments.
- Consider using name tags, especially if people don't already know each other or if there are new people at your gathering.
- Greet people as they come in.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES OF GROUP MEMBERS

Each group needs to function by some basic rules, which you can initiate and model. Each group member shares responsibility for adhering to these basic rules:

- Start and end on time.
- Be inclusive of everyone at the gathering.
- Give everyone a chance to talk. However, sharing is an option; no one is required to share.
- Stick to the topic. When discussion strays, tactfully get the group back on task, especially if one or two people tend to dominate the discussion.
- Encourage an attitude of mutual respect among the participants as they share their feelings and thoughts about the topic. Reinforce the idea that there are many good ways to parent and many variations in how parents will choose to use the material offered in the lesson.
- What happens and is said during group sessions stays in the group. Encourage participants to be sensitive to privacy needs of others in the group and their family members who may not be in attendance.

DEALING WITH 'STICKY' SITUATIONS

Sometimes, even when you lay out basic rules, you may encounter some "sticky" situations in your workshop. Take time before the session begins to anticipate such situations and think how you will handle them. For example, parents and caregivers may disclose too many personal details. If you find yourself in this "sticky" situation:

- Remind the entire group that the purpose of the workshop is education. Some issues might be better dealt with in family counseling or in another setting.
- Offer to visit one-on-one with the parent or caregiver after class to offer suggestions on where to go for more resources. Then, move the discussion forward.
- If your group participants are members of a community in which everyone knows everyone else, remind the group that what is said in the group stays in the group, and should not be shared outside the group.

RESPONDING TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

As strategies are discussed, some parents or caregivers might say, "I've tried that and it didn't work." Here are ways you might respond:

- Not every strategy works in every situation or with every family.
- Did you try _____?
- Why not try the same thing again? Sometimes strategies don't work the first time, or the second, or even the third. But if you keep trying and are consistent, the rules *do* sink in.



With forethought and planning about your group and preparing for your role as facilitator, you are well on your way to helping parents and families of teens!

REFERENCES

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