

Parents and Teens: Connections with Impact



WISCONSIN DPI

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction

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Student Services/Prevention & Wellness Team
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
Post Office Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841
(608) 267-9354

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the families who chose to share details of their relationships so that others may learn about parent-teen relationships and explore characteristics that provide support for a teen's success in life.

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Program Purpose and Background

This booklet is a facilitator's guide to implementing a one- to two-session program for parents and their teenage children. Sessions can be implemented with just parents or with parents and teens together. Video clips, available through YouTube, provide family stories that can initiate discussions on influence.

Purpose

The resource was designed for parents and their teens in an effort to shed light on and encourage parents in their role as “primary influencer” of their children's choices.

This program was created after listening to teens from across Wisconsin. The teens were participating in focus groups as a part of a statewide initiative to learn about how parents, teachers, and other adults, are influencing teens to avoid risky sexual behavior. One consistent message heard from teens was that they wanted to be able to have open communication with their parents. They wanted to feel listened to and wanted to learn from the real lives of their parents. They talked about the struggle to be the person they want to be in the midst of many pressures. They wanted their family life to be a safe place to talk, to learn and test healthy limits, and to find unconditional acceptance.

This project set out to discover characteristics of parent-teen relationships that added to the success of the teen. As the parent-teen pairs were interviewed, commonalities among even the most diverse families began to arise. What emerged was a pattern of influence that included the following:

- Information parents give to their children.
- Examples children see.
- Experiences that shape their understanding.
- Parental attitudes.
- Rules/consequences.
- The ways that parents found to maintain the connection with their teens even during some very tough times (grace).

Program Use

1. Inspire conversation among parents and other adults who care for teens.
2. Engage teens in reflecting on the parent-child relationship.
3. Guide families in purposefully creating their communication patterns.

Curriculum Outline

1. Welcome and introduction to program.
2. Introduction to six areas of influence.
3. General look at how parents influence youth.
 - Guiding questions that lead into video stories.
 - View video segments.
 - Discuss segments using reflection questions.
4. Specific look at influence and sexual attitudes and behavior.
 - View all areas of influence through video stories.
 - Discuss and apply to own family.
5. Closing.

Implementation Strategies

- One session program delivery—two hours with break.
- Two session program delivery—one hour each with general influence in session one and influence on sexual behavior and attitudes in session two.
- Limit presentation to the general influence segments and imbed in parenting program on other youth topics such as alcohol and drug abuse, violence prevention, healthy relationships, etc.

Curriculum Plan

Room Set-up

When possible, have tables and chairs for participants arranged in a semi-circle with all facing towards the center front but able to see each other.

Supplies

- Pencils and/or pens
- Chalk board, white board, or newsprint with markers
- Nametags for first names only in large print

Equipment and Materials

- Laptop computer
- Access to Internet to view video clips
http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=7D46F19C6FB6ADD3
- LCD Projector
- Please note that a PowerPoint presentation is included with this document to demonstrate the flow of the presentation. The majority of the slides are included in the video clips, therefore, the presentation might work best as a handout.

Objectives of curriculum

- Parents (and teens) will gain knowledge of how behavior is influenced.
- Parents will increase their belief that they can influence their children towards achieving the goals they and/or their children have.
- Parents will discuss strategies to influence sexual health behaviors and attitudes.
- Parents (and teens) will plan to implement specific strategies in their parent-teen relationships to increase positive connections and influence.

1. Welcome and Introduction to the Program (10 minutes)

- Name and background of instructor(s).
- Participants introduce self and age of children.
- Put participants at ease by acknowledging the diversity of members of the group as an important plus—age, experience, beliefs, background, etc.
- Common Ground for Parenting and Sexuality Issues.

Regardless of the issues that may divide us, when we talk about parenting and specifically parenting around issues of sexuality, there are some areas of common ground that bring us all together. If the group seems comfortable with involvement at this point, ask for examples of common ground goals that parents have for their children. If not, ask the group if they agree that they want our children to develop into healthy, mature adults. This is the common ground we all share as we ask what we can do to positively influence their development.

The parents you will meet through the video stories presented in this program have the same common goals for their children. You will see that each approaches parenting from a slightly different perspective and that each of their children brings unique personalities, strengths, and challenges to the family. They share their stories not because they believe that they have found all the answers but to help us to begin a conversation about the strategies that helped them to

become a stronger force in their children's lives. They are courageous to open their private family lives to us so that we might learn from their experiences.

TODAY WE HOPE TO:

- Explore positive parent-teen relationships to discover what characteristics have the greatest positive impact.
- Understand ways to increase our positive influence on our children.
- Celebrate all that is right in our relationships and plan for changes we'd like to make.

SUGGESTED GROUND RULES (you may wish to have the group arrive at its own):

- Use "Yes...and" rather than "but" when adding your comments to a discussion.
- Share observations rather than judgment.
- Laugh.
- Maintain confidentiality when speaking about others.
- What is said in this group stays within the group.

2. Introduction to the Six Areas of Influence (time varies)

Briefly explain the six areas of influence listed on the slide. To influence someone to make a particular choice, one must know how to increase the person's **knowledge** about the choice and about the **will** to choose it. For a parent to do this, the parent needs to know the child and have some general understanding of what can be expected of a child at different stages of growth and development. The six areas of influence are:

INFORMATION—What do our children hear from us and others? We influence youth by what we say to them. Information needs repeating. We often forget most of what we hear.

EXAMPLE—What behaviors do our children see modeled around them? Youth are influenced by our behavior. What we do has more influence than what we say.

EXPERIENCE—What have earlier experiences taught our children about their strength and abilities and how life works? What experiences allow them to practice the character trait you are hoping to build? Look for ways to show your child a new picture of him/herself.

ATTITUDE—What beliefs about your child's potential does s/he get from others? When youth know that adults believe in them, they are influenced to behave according to those beliefs.

RULES AND CONSEQUENCES—What are the family rules and expectations? How were they decided? What are the positive consequences for fulfilling expectations? What are the consequences for breaking the rules? What youth experience as a result of their choices influence future choices. Sometimes we impose logical consequences to help our child avoid the natural consequences of the behavior. For example, we might put a child in the house after they run into the street (logical) to avoid the consequence (natural) of being hit by a car. Praise the behaviors you would like to see from them more often. Describe what you see and sum up with a word describing the positive trait. Ask them how it feels to them or what they experienced as a result of making the positive choice.

Family and group rules work best if they are clear, spoken, consistent and flexible.

GRACE—How do we respond when limits are tested or independent choices are made? How do we allow the child to get back into the circle of influence and learning? How families handle the mistakes that youth make influences if and how they re-enter the cycle of influence.

3. General Look at How Parents Influence Youth (time varies)

- Guiding questions that lead into video stories.
- View three video clips (please note that the PowerPoint presentation prompts for pausing each clip at various points to allow for discussion).
- Discussion using reflection questions.

Suggested Teaching Strategies to Incorporate During Discussions

- Dual interviews where participants work in pairs to interview each other using a set of follow-up discussion questions—Example: What example from your parents' lives has had a big impact on the person you have become?
- Brainstorm ideas for open-ended discussion questions to move the group from judgment to creative thinking—Example: brainstorm one-liners that parents have heard said about teens that make it difficult to approach their child with a positive attitude.
- Role play family interaction—Example: put participants into family groups with diverse structure and give them 10-15 minutes to create their family expectations, rules, and consequences.
- Creative expression—Example: Write, draw, or create in another way a message of grace to your child or a teen with whom you have worked and who has made a mistake.

Introduction to Information

- What messages were the parents trying to give their teens?
- View Video Clip Part 1: INFORMATION and EXAMPLES.
- Pause for discussion.

Discussion on Information

- What messages were the parents giving their teens?
- What about how someone tells you something allows you to listen effectively?

Introduction to Example

- How does what the teens see their parents do compare to what they hear them say?
- What examples from the parents' lives seemed to have great influence on the teens?
- Continue viewing Video Clip Part 1: INFORMATION and EXAMPLES.
- Pause for discussion.

Discussion on Example

- What areas of example are challenges for some parents?
- What might parents reveal more of to their teens to allow their lives to be a stronger example?
- What example from your parents' lives has had a great impact on the person you have become?

Introduction to Experience

- What earlier experiences in the teens' lives had a connection to choices they faced in the teen years?
- What experiences did parents "create" for their teens?
- View Video Clip Part 2: EXPERIENCES and ATTITUDE.
- Pause for discussion.

Discussion on Experience

- What experiences might a child have that would teach them a negative lesson for the teen's years?
- What experiences can a parent create to teach their child some important character traits?

Introduction to Attitude

- How did the parents express a sense of belief in their teen's abilities to make positive choices?
- Continue viewing Video Clip Part 2: EXPERIENCES and ATTITUDE.

Discussion on Attitude

- What have you seen or heard that makes expressing belief in a teen difficult?
- Who expressed belief in you as you grew into adulthood? What impact did that have on your decisions?

Introduction to Rules and Consequences

- Rules can be stated or unstated and understood or misunderstood. What rules did these families have? Were they stated and understood by parent and teen?
- What were the consequences of breaking rules? Which consequences seemed to have the greatest impact?
- View Video Clip Part 3: RULES/CONSEQUENCES and GRACE.
- Pause for discussion.

Discussion on Rules & Consequences

- Which rules are most important to the goals you have for your family? Are they stated and understood by all?
- What changes in your rules and consequences might be helpful?

Introduction to Grace

- How do these parents establish and re-establish connections with their teens during situations where limits have been tested and/or independent choices made?

- Continue viewing Video Clip Part 3: RULES/CONSEQUENCES and GRACE.
- Pause for discussion.

Discussion on Grace

- What approach have you found helpful to express unconditional love when your teen made a choice that opposes your beliefs?
- What examples of actions or words cause disconnect between a parent and teen?
- What works for you when you want to reconnect with your teen to keep him/her in your circle of influence?

4. Specific Look at Influence and Sexual Attitudes and Behavior (time varies)

- View all areas of influence through video clip.
- View Video Clip Part 4: Conversations about Sexuality.
- Discuss and apply to own family.

Listen to the stories of teens and parents. Look for how the areas of influence have played out in their relationships around issues of sexuality.

- Information
- Example
- Experience
- Attitude
- Rules & Consequences
- Grace

Discussion on Influences

- What did you notice influenced these teens' understandings and behaviors regarding sexuality?
- Some of the teens' choices led the parents to re-examine their approach and discover ways to maintain influence. What were some of the positive responses to teen behavior you noticed?

5. Closing (10 minutes)

Review Main Points of Program

- We influence our children towards our goals or away from them every day in all our interactions with them.
- We can be purposeful about how we influence youth. Encouragement and letting go of guilt are essential. When we realize our shortcomings we need not respond by giving excuses for our behavior or let guilt paralyze us.

Today you have:

- Discussed how the information we provide our children can influence their behavior
- Examined how the behaviors that are modeled for children influence their behavior
- Shared experiences you can provide your children that will allow them to practice character traits you hope to build within them.
- Explored how to communicate your belief in your children's abilities and the impact that knowing an adult believes in them can have on behavior.

- Analyzed how establishing family rules and setting positive and negative consequences for behavior can create an expectation for positive choices
- And, explored the concept of grace. The strategies a family might use to allow the child back into the circle of influence and learning.

Allow time to share reactions or personal commitments.

Thank-you!

Provide invitation to other parent support programs of the organization.

Worksheet—Influencing Youth

Knowledge

Information
Example
Experience

Will

Attitude
Rules & Consequences
Grace

INFORMATION—We influence youth by what we say to them. Information needs to be repeated. We often forget most of what we hear.

EXAMPLE—Youth are influenced by our behavior. What we do has more influence than what we say.

EXPERIENCE—The experiences youth encounter influence their beliefs and choices. Plan ways for your child to practice the skill or character trait you are hoping to build. Look for ways to show your child a new picture of him/herself. Put them in situations where they can see themselves differently.

ATTITUDE—When youth believe that adults believe in them they are influenced to behave according to those beliefs.

RULES AND CONSEQUENCES—What youth experience as a result of their choices influences their future choices.

Natural and logical consequences protect from the impact of natural consequences.

Praise what they do that you want to see more of; describe what you see, and sum up with a word describing the positive trait. Ask them how it feels or what they experienced as a result of the positive choice.

Family and group rules work best if they are clear, spoken, consistent, and flexible.

GRACE—How the mistakes that youth make are handled influences if/where they re-enter the cycle of influence. Do we allow the child to get back into the cycle of influence and learning?

Choose a characteristic, behavior, or value that you would like to encourage a youth to choose.



Give ideas for how you will provide each of the six areas of influence when it comes to the topic of influence you chose.

Knowledge	Will
Information	Attitude
Example	Consequences
Experience	Grace

Example Worksheet—Honesty

Knowledge

Information
Example
Experience

Will

Attitude
Rules & Consequences
Grace

INFORMATION: We influence youth by what we say to them. Information needs to be repeated. We often forget most of what we hear.

EXAMPLE: Youth are influenced by our behavior. What we do says more than what we say.

EXPERIENCE: The experiences youth encounter influence their beliefs and choices. Plan ways for your child to practice the skill or character trait you are hoping to build. Look for ways to show your child a new picture of him/herself. Put them in situations where they can see themselves differently.

ATTITUDE: When youth believe that adults believe in them they are influenced to behave according to those beliefs.

RULES AND CONSEQUENCES: What youth experience as a result of their choices will influence their future choices.

Natural and logical consequences protect from the impact of natural consequences.

Praise what they do that you want to see more of, describe what you see, and sum up with a word describing the positive trait. Ask them how it feels or what they experienced as a result of the positive choice.

Family and group rules work best if they are clear, spoken, consistent, and flexible.

GRACE: How the mistakes that youth make are handled influences if/where they re-enter the cycle of influence. Do we allow the child to get back into the cycle of influence and learning?

Choose a characteristic, behavior, or value that you would like to influence a youth to choose.

Give ideas for how you will provide each of the six areas of influence when it comes to the topic of influence you chose.

Honesty

Knowledge

Information—*Tell children people like honesty. Even when it is hard it is best to be honest. Describe the honest choice in situations. Explain “white lies,” etc.*

Example—*Be honest with your children and others. Tell them when you are faced with a hard choice and you choose honesty, Avoid secrets that imply it is OK to lie.*

Experience—*When child is faced with honesty choice, talk about the choice and let them make it (when consequences are not too significant). Discuss the outcome and what would have happened with other options. Highlight times when they experience someone being honest with them and how it felt for both of them.*

Will

Attitude—*Do not call your child a liar. Talk about them as ones who believe in honesty and have the courage to speak the truth. See them as truthful people who at times struggle to be honest.*

Rules and Consequences—*Work together to choose consequences for telling the truth when it is difficult as well as ones for not being truthful. For example, if you tell me about breaking a rule before I find out in another manner, the consequence will be less harsh.*

Grace—*When dishonesty is chosen, reflect together on how it felt and what other choices could have been made. Tell your child that you believe they will find a way to choose honesty in the future. Ask what you can do to support their honesty.*

Video Participants



Norma and her children, Anna and Carlos



Annette and her daughters, Chhabria and Briana



Courtney and her son, AJ



Mark and his daughter, Lane



Nadine and her daughter, Jessica



Marti and her son, Brice



Nancy, Sue and their daughter, Katie

Resources

TITLE	AUTHOR	FORMAT
Fostering Goodness: Teaching Parents to Facilitate Children's Moral Development parenthood.library.wisc.edu/Berkowitz/Berkowitz.html	Marvin W. Berkowitz, PhD	Publication
The Parenting Network www.theparentingnetwork.org		Website
Family Resource Center www.fdlfair.org		Website
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development www.nichd.nih.gov		Website
Search Institute www.search-institute.org		Website
Advocates for Youth www.advocatesforyouth.org		Website
There's no place like home for sex education http://www.noplacelikehome.org/	Mary Gossart Jacqueline Sequoia	Website
Sex and the Silent Parent	Adam Wilkenfeld	Video
Words can Work when Talking with Kids about Sexual Health	Jeanne Blake	Book
Parent Power: What parents need to know and do to help prevent teen pregnancy	National Campaign to Prevent Teen pregnancy	Publication
All about Life: Caring about myself, my family and my community	Caren Monastersky	Curriculum
Family Guided Sexuality Education Handbook www.optionsclinic.org/resources.html		Publication
Saving Sex for Later	Host John Amos	Video
Parenting for HIV Prevention	Channing Bete Co.	Presentation Kit
Raising Health Kids: Families talk about sexual health www.abouthealth.com	Mediaworks	Video

*This is not a comprehensive list

