

Group Leader's Guide



Parentalk

THE TEENAGE YEARS



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How to run *Parentalk – The Teenage Years*

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Introduction

Thank you for choosing *Parentalk – The Teenage Years*!

Parentalk – The Teenage Years is a video-based parenting course that is specifically designed for use with small groups of parents in a relaxed and informal setting. It is suitable for all mums and dads, whether they are parenting together, alone or as a stepfamily and whatever size family they have.

One of the things that makes *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* effective is that it gives parents the chance to get together and talk about the realities of bringing up their teenagers. In sharing their experiences, they are able to see in a very practical way the things that work well and those that don't! *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* explores the important role that parents have in their teenager's life and looks at some of the everyday challenges that they face. Importantly, the content is well researched and based on what is known to be effective in building strong relationships within families.

Over six sessions, *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* looks at some of the key issues that parents of teenagers face, as well as valuable principles that can be applied on a day-to-day basis. We hope that, by the end, the group will have discovered a range of practical strategies and tips to help them in their family life. Some parents may even want to

explore things further and decide to go on a more in-depth parenting course.

At the start, it's helpful to let your group know that *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* is not a course that will tell them all they need to know about parenting teenagers. It will, however, help them get to know themselves better as parents so that they can build on their strengths and discover things they might want to start to do differently. *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* doesn't set out to solve major conflict and relationship problems within the family, but it does aim to help parents develop and deepen the relationship they already have with their teenagers.

Parentalk can be used in a wide range of settings, including schools, churches or other faith based groups and community education.

Each session is video-based and includes discussions to give everyone an opportunity to take part. Give each parent a copy of the Parent Notes. This will encourage and remind them about what they have learned in each session and help them to notice any small, but often significant, changes that are happening in their family life throughout the course.

Running *Parentalk – The Teenage Years*

Parentalk – The Teenage Years encourages parents to help each other, so being a parent yourself is probably the most useful qualification for running it! If you're a parent who enjoys reading, talking, listening to others and bringing out the best in them, then you will probably make a good course leader. Other qualifications and experience are not essential as this Group Leader's Guide gives you useful tips about running a group and leading parents through the sessions, step by step.

Keep in mind that you will be learning alongside everyone else. You are not expected to be an expert or have all the answers, but simply to be the person to make the course happen. One good thing about discussion groups like these is

that nobody is more of an expert than anybody else; everyone can share their individual family experiences with one another.

The video, Group Leader's Guide and Parent Notes are written in an easy-to-follow format. The material is flexible. For example, six individual sessions can be run for one to two hours each, or the whole six sessions can be run over a weekend.

It is ideal for people who have not taken part in any kind of parenting course before (as well as for those who have) and for any group of parents who want to meet informally.

Send us your feedback

Each time you finish a course, please complete the five-minute survey at: surveymonkey.com/r/parentalk-teens-feedback. This will help us to make sure the course remains a great resource for all parents. We would also value feedback from the parents in your group and you can download evaluation forms when you register your course.

The sessions

The video and this Group Leader's Guide will take you through each session. It is important to set aside some time to prepare for each session by watching the video and read the information in this guide and in the Parent Notes.

The guide includes:

- How to run a group and take parents through the sessions
- What we hope parents will learn during each session
- The running order for the video and discussions, including some questions to get conversations started and helpful tips
- Timings – these are a general guide and are based on a two-hour session, however you can vary the length of each session depending on the time that you or the group have available

The Parent Notes contains a summary of the key points from the video, and will be a useful reference tool for parents long after the course has finished. They are written in a light-hearted, easy-to-read way, and there's space to write down any key points to remember. Additional copies of the Group Leader's Guide and Parent Notes can be purchased from the Care for the Family shop at: cff.org.uk/shop or by calling 029 2081 0800.

A place to meet

Parents will enjoy the sessions if they are fun, informal and relaxed. A key aim is to create an atmosphere where they feel welcomed and safe. We also hope that they will come to understand that they are not on their own in going through the ups and downs of parenting teenagers. It's important to let parents know that they can talk about things if they want to, but that it's also OK for them to just sit and listen.

Make sure that the room you use is comfortable, that it can hold the number of people you've invited, and that the temperature isn't too hot or too cold. When you set the room up, think about how big it is and the size of your group. Place the chairs or sofas so that everyone can see each other. The discussions will work well with people in a circle, or in smaller groups. Remember to leave space to serve refreshments and for everyone to be able to see the video on a TV or a screen. It's also useful to consider whether there are any issues with people being able to get to the session. When choosing a venue, think about whether it's safe for parents when they are arriving and leaving, especially during the evening.

It can be helpful to run a 'taster' session and show a few video clips to give parents an insight into what the course will involve.

Equipment

To lead *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* you will need:

- A laptop to play the video content
- A TV or a projector with screen and speakers
- Pens, one for each parent
- Parent Notes, one for each parent

Who should attend?

Ideally, the course works best if mum and dad attend together so that they can both take on board new ideas and work together in their parenting. If both would like to attend but aren't able to, it might be possible for them to take turns in coming.

Often it's the dads who don't attend, but it's important to encourage them to do so as their role is vital. Whether it's spending time with the kids at the end of the day, or having a serious chat about friendships at school, a dad is every bit as important to a teenager as a mum. Make dads feel welcome whenever they can make it.

Some dos and don'ts when leading

DO try to prepare well. Read the session notes and watch the video beforehand. Think about how the discussion might go, but be prepared for the unexpected!

DON'T let one person dominate the discussion, give direct advice, or criticise another parent. Everyone can say what's worked for them, but this shouldn't deflate the confidence of another parent by implying that they've got it wrong.

DO make a big effort to put everyone at their ease at the beginning of the session. Consider sharing something funny that's happened to you as a parent in the last week.

DON'T consistently start sessions late or overrun. If you start promptly, people should soon get the message that they will miss something if they turn up late. If you always wait for them it devalues the effort of those who are on time and runs the risk of the session ending later and later, inconveniencing everyone.

DO try to summarise people's contributions to the discussion. Link them in with the main points to keep the discussion on track. You'll find that if you acknowledge what they say, for example, "I found what Anne said really helpful", each parent will feel a vital part of the group and grow in confidence.

DON'T use the group as a sounding board for your own problems... but do share your parenting in other ways, especially things you've got wrong that you are able to be light-hearted about. It will put you on an equal footing with the group, rather than just being the leader.

DO think in advance how you might handle things if anybody becomes upset or angry. It doesn't often happen, but it may occur occasionally. We've got some advice on how to deal with this situation below.

DON'T feel you have to use every word of the notes, or cover every main point. Be flexible. Your group will get the best from the course if you gear it to their needs. Many parents just appreciate the opportunity to talk and gain support from one another.

DO always end on an encouraging and uplifting note. As parents we need all the encouragement we can get!

What's involved in being part of the group?

At the start, when sharing your expectations of the course, it might be an idea to discuss how the whole group can help things run smoothly. You might make this part of an

introductory or taster session, so that everyone knows what to expect. Parents need to feel they are in a safe place before they can share something of themselves and their lives. They may welcome some boundaries on confidentiality, like the use of the informal 'Group focus' which is printed at the beginning of the Parent Notes.

Each group will probably have a variety of family structures represented, e.g. blended families, single-parent families, foster carers, two resident parents. As you discuss what you see and hear on the video, it will be important that everyone has the opportunity to talk about how it might be in their own situation.

What shall I do if parents miss a number of sessions?

There are likely to be occasions when parents can't attend a session for one reason or another. If others are aware why someone is missing, and if it is appropriate, this may be an opportunity for the group to offer help and support in practical ways.

If someone is absent for an unknown reason, and especially if they've not attended a couple of times or more, it is good to let them know that they have been missed and to maintain contact via a phone call, text message, or a card from everyone. This might be enough to encourage a less confident parent to continue with the group. Bear in mind, however, that some people may find this a bit threatening – as if they are being checked up on. In most cases, people will be touched that they have been missed, but you do need to be sensitive. If it is obvious that the group just doesn't suit someone, they should not feel pressurised or guilty because they have stopped coming.

What shall I do if someone becomes distressed or angry in a session?

A parent may sometimes get distressed when certain topics or experiences are discussed. This can be due to feelings of failure, hopelessness, fear or guilt, and they may express anger as much as tears. Often just a word or phrase is enough to trigger memories or hurts that may have been long buried or mostly forgotten.

The most important thing to remember is not to appear shocked by this, or judgmental about anything they say. While a parent cannot be allowed to repeatedly disrupt a group, the group itself can be invaluable in giving them short-term security and support. A fellow parent can hold out a reassuring hand, and often this is all that is needed. It helps to have a box of tissues available!

When someone has been upset during a session, ask them gently how they are at the end. If you felt it appropriate, you could also ask whether they would like further help or a referral to someone outside the group who could work through their thoughts and feelings with them.

If a distressed parent causes too big a disruption during the session, you may need to suggest that they find help outside the group. This requires a considerable amount of sensitivity and care as you need to try to do this without isolating the person or making them feel rejected. For this reason, it is advisable to have some form of counselling and backup support available outside the group for any parents who need it. Always emphasise that they are welcome to re-join the group at any time they feel able, or that they can join another *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* at a later date. Assure them, also, that they have not in any way failed by sharing their feelings with the group.

Details of how Care for the Family can further help and support parents are at the end of this guide, along with a list of other helpful parent support organisations.

Safeguarding children

The safety and welfare of children, or child protection, means protecting children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. Child protection is everybody's business. There may be a circumstance when you are given an indication that child abuse has taken place. In this situation you can contact the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline (available 24 hours a day) on 0808 800 5000, or thirtyone:eight on 0303 003 11 11.

Monitor how you go

In order to get the best from your course, it can help to keep a session diary by writing some brief notes about how you feel things went generally, what did and didn't work well. You might like to add parents' comments about the session, and what you think you might do differently next time. Try to make your notes as soon as you can after the session while it is fresh in your memory. Use them to help you plan the next sessions and also to reflect on your own experience as a group member.

What comes next?

At the end of the course, some parents may feel they've had enough time to discuss the issues that are important to them. Others may like to continue to meet on a less regular basis, perhaps over coffee, to continue to share together and support one another. Think together about what you'd like to do next. You could use Care for the Family's *Raising Teens* podcast series to start a discussion on a specific issue (cff.org.uk/parenting/raisingteens), invite a youth specialist to talk to the group, or arrange a social activity.

What happens in a session?

Each session explores a particular theme about parenting and family life.

Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons of Care for the Family will introduce each session and talk briefly about the theme.

'Word on the street' (Video)

Teenagers in the street answer questions about family life. The different views expressed in these clips are a good way for your parents to engage with the topic.

'Talk about' opening group discussion

Use the introduction by Rob to begin a discussion on the theme. This first discussion is just for the group to begin thinking generally about the topic.

'The Parentalk family' drama (Video)

A light-hearted drama clip of the theme from the *Parentalk* family.

'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Parents and teenagers share their thoughts and experiences.

'Talk about' group discussion

Explore the theme in a bit more depth, thinking about what you've just heard on the video.

Break

You may need to keep an eye on the time and make sure this doesn't go on for too long, but also remember that this is a good opportunity for the parents to get to know each other.

'My story' (Video)

An animated real-life story.

'My story' – group discussion

This is a short time for the group to give their immediate response to the story. Do they relate to the mum or dad they've just heard? Their responses may raise some questions that can be explored in a later discussion.

Presenter discussion (Video)

Katharine Hill from Care for the Family is joined by two guests who have particular expertise on the subject of the

session. They discuss the issues covered in 'My story' and share some helpful insights on the theme.

'Talk about' group discussion

Ask the group for their thoughts on the insights shared by the presenters in the 'My story' presenter discussion.

Conclusion (Video)

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes in the session.

'The one thing...'

This is an opportunity to look back at the main themes of the session. Allow time for each individual to identify the one thing they particularly want to remember, or action, from the session.

Who presents Parentalk – The Teenage Years?

Rob Parsons, OBE is an international speaker and author of over thirty books, including the bestselling *Sixty Minute* series, and *Teenagers – What Every Parent Has to Know*. He is the founder and chairman of Care for the Family and over the last 35 years has spoken to over a million people across the world on family issues. Rob is married to Dianne and lives in Cardiff. They have two children and five grandchildren. In 2012 Rob was awarded an OBE for services to family support.

Katharine Hill is the UK Director for Care for the Family and regularly writes articles, gives interviews and presents marriage and parenting events across the country. Katharine previously worked as a family law solicitor. She has authored a number of books, including *Left to Their Own Devices – Confident Parenting In a World of Screens*, and *A Mind of Their Own – Building Your Child's Emotional Wellbeing In a Post-Pandemic World*. Katharine is married to Richard and they have four grown-up children – who have survived the teenage years!

Guest presenters

Sarah Abell is the former agony aunt of the Daily Telegraph, the author of *Inside Out – How to Have Authentic Relationships with Everyone in your Life* and a columnist for *Psychologies* magazine. She started her career as a BBC TV reporter before moving into relationship education. Sarah helped to produce relationship courses that have been used by thousands of couples around the world. She has been married to David for eleven years, and they have one son.

Caroline Bradley is National Representative for Care for the Family in Northern Ireland. She has been married to Paul for over 30 years and is mum to three adult sons and grandma to one granddaughter. With only 22 months between her eldest and twin sons, she experienced all the highs and lows that the rollercoaster of parenthood brings. She is passionate about making the parenting road a rewarding, memorable and fun experience.

Mark Chester is a writer, speaker and founder of Who Let The Dads Out? an initiative to help churches establish parent and toddler groups aimed at dads. Mark previously worked for Liverpool Football Club where he developed and managed the *Tactics 4 Families* community project. He is the author of several books, including *The Soul of Football*. He is married to Su, and they have two teenage children.

Paul Francis is married to Jane and is the senior leader of a church in Cardiff. Previously a youth leader, he co-founded *Going Public*, a charity that works with young people in schools and youth clubs, exploring issues surrounding sex and sexuality. He has written three books including *Help Your Kids Stay Drug-Free* and has spoken to over 200,000 young people and parents on various youth-related issues.

Rachel Gardner is the President of the Girl's Brigade and founder of Romance Academy. Author of a number of books for teens and young adults, Rachel is a keen campaigner on youth-related issues and is on the board of the Cinnamon Network and the fostering and adoption charity Home For Good. She is the Youth Manager at Ignite, which specialises in working with young people in gangs in London. She's married to Jason and they have an adopted daughter.

Carrie Grant is married to David. They have four children, one of whom is adopted, all with additional needs. She has been vocal coach to prominent artists such as Take That and Gwyneth Paltrow and her TV work includes BBC1's *Fame Academy* and *The One Show*. Carrie also works with Mumsnet, the National Association of Special Educational Needs, The National PTA and is an Anti-bullying Ambassador with The Diana Trust. Carrie is a keen campaigner for change in the UK's health and education systems and has helped the DfE promote their SEN Reform.

Philip Jinadu is an associate minister for a church of over 1,500 people in Bristol and began his working life over 25 years ago with Youth for Christ. He is part of Care for the Family's national speaking team and also speaks extensively at conferences and churches. Philip writes and consults on issues around strategic leadership and community engagement. He is married to Kate and they have two teenage daughters.

Wendy Jones is a qualified teacher and counsellor. She worked in further education for many years as a student counsellor as well as providing therapeutic counselling within Primary Care. More recently she has worked with the charity Sycamore Counselling and has written and facilitated an anger management course on behalf of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner. Wendy works with Care for the Family to provide listening support to bereaved parents and training for their bereavement befrienders and has written a course on anger management for its *Time Out for Parents* series.

Dr Krish Kandiah is the founder and director of Home for Good, a charity seeking to find forever families for children in care in the UK. He is also a vice president of Tearfund, President of the London School of Theology and on the faculty at Regents Park College, Oxford University. Krish and his wife Miriam have authored ten books and live in Oxfordshire with their four children. They regularly foster children and Krish is a champion for fostering and adoption.

Dave Lumsdon is married to Pam; they have a grown-up son and two grandchildren. Following a period as a primary teacher, Dave trained to be an Educational Psychologist and worked in many roles before becoming Principal Educational Psychologist in Northumberland. He is a tutor on the *Educational Psychology Doctorate Training Programme* at Newcastle University and runs his own psychology business. Dave is particularly interested in working with parents.

Cathy Madavan is a speaker and writer and tours the country with Care for the Family's events for mums. She writes a regular column for *Liberti* magazine and is the author of the book *Digging for Diamonds*. She is married to Mark and they have two teenage girls.

Jason Royce is the director of Romance Academy, a movement educating teenagers about healthy relationships. He has worked in informal education for the past 16 years and now currently speaks and writes widely about issues that affect young people. Jason co-authored the *Parent's Guide To: Talking About Sex With Your Teenager*.

Session 1: Understanding your teenager

Overview

Confusion, fear, anxiety and bewilderment are common emotions experienced by parents of teenagers. The same emotions are experienced by teenagers themselves. The teenage years are a time of turmoil and transition for both child and parents, as both have to learn a new way of relating to each other and the world. During this transition stage, a teenager may not be 'lovable' but they need to know they are loved. As parents we need to understand what is 'normal' adolescent behaviour and what is happening to them – physically, emotionally and mentally.

Key learning points for this session:

- You are not alone.
- They're not just being difficult.
- They don't really 'hate you!'.
- Keep the lines of communication open.
- During this transition they may not be 'lovable' but they need to know they are loved.
- Just get them through it.

Running the session

Times are based on a two-hour session. Make sure you are set up and ready to begin before people start arriving.

10 min Welcome

As people arrive welcome them with any refreshments you may have provided. Allow a little bit of time for people to mingle and chat before you officially start the session. As you begin, introduce yourself and anyone else you may have helping you. Set them at ease by explaining a bit about *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* and how the session will run. Emphasise that it's not about being shown the 'right' way to do things, but an opportunity for them to talk about their own experiences and learn from each other as well as from the material on the video. Reassure the group that they don't have to say anything if they don't want to.

You may like to give the opportunity for everyone to get to know one another better by asking each parent or carer to introduce themselves and say how many children they have. You can also talk with parents about the 'Group focus' at the beginning of the Parent Notes to ensure it is understood.

4 min Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons introduces *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* and the main themes of this session.

This leads straight into:

2 min 'Word on the street' (Video)

We asked young people on the street: "How well do you get on with your parents?"

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ How well do you feel you get on with your child(ren)?
- ❷ What is the main challenge currently facing you as a parent?
- ❸ What are you hoping to get out of this course?

2 min 'The Parentalk family' (Video)

The *Parentalk* parents' response when they realise that their daughter has become a teenager overnight.

This leads into:

8 min 'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Family interviews: Parents and teenagers discuss this session's themes.

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- 🕒 What's the most difficult thing about having teenagers?
- 🕒 How have your children changed since they became teenagers?
- 🕒 Do you feel as though you understand your teenagers?
- 🕒 What's the best thing about having teenagers?
- 🕒 If your children are not yet teenagers, what's your biggest fear concerning the teenage years? Does anyone have a story that might help address this fear?

10 min Break

Time to stretch the legs and/or have some refreshments.

2 min 'My story' (Video)

One dad relates how he doesn't really understand his daughter's behaviour.

Pause the video.

6 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- 🕒 In what ways do you relate to this dad's experience?
- 🕒 Has anyone had a similar experience? If so what helped you reconnect with your teenager?

12 min Presenter discussion (Video)

Katharine Hill, Dave Lumsdon and Cathy Madavan discuss the issues that have been raised in 'My story'. This includes the following points:

- All parents experience this kind of thing.
- This isn't just them 'being difficult'.

- All teenagers go through physical and emotional changes.
- They are learning to reason and debate
- Understand what is 'normal' adolescent behaviour.
- The change in relationship can be particularly hard for single parents.
- Enjoy the good things about parenting teenagers.

Pause the video.

20 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- 🕒 What did you relate to, or what interested you most, in the story or the discussion? Why?
- 🕒 What do you think is 'normal' teenage behaviour?
- 🕒 How do you think your teenager is feeling if their behaviour has become more challenging?
- 🕒 Is your teenager becoming stronger in their opinions? If so, how can you help them as they question everything?
- 🕒 Where do you think your teenager is in their emotional development?
- 🕒 If you have concerns, who do you have that you can talk to about them?
- 🕒 If your child hasn't changed much since becoming a teenager how do you feel about the thought of them changing?

4 min Conclusion (Video)

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes of the session.

Play the video to the end.

10 min 'The one thing...'

Allow everyone a minute or two to think about all they've seen and heard during the session. Ask them to make a note in their Parent Notes of the one thing they want to remember or act on. Ask if anyone would like to share what that one thing is, although there should be no pressure to do this. It's OK to keep it private.

End on an upbeat note, for example, tell them about a positive time you've had recently with your teenager and ask if anyone would like to tell the group about a recent moment with their own teenager.

Thank everyone for coming and for their contribution to the discussion. Let them know the time and date of the next session and tell them the theme for Session 2 will be 'Staying connected.' We had a great discussion today. I'm looking forward to seeing you next time.

Session 2: Staying connected

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Overview

During the teenage years parents often feel that they're only needed to provide meals, do the laundry and provide transport and money. The truth is our teenagers do need us to stay connected. They need a secure base from which to explore the world and a place to come back to when they need an anchor, especially when the storms are raging. When they push against us it may not feel like they need us, but knowing that our teenagers do still need us, even though our role may be changing, can help us be there for them and show them unconditional love.

Key learning points for this session:

- Teenagers still need us, it just might not look like it!
- It is important to stay connected and try to find shared interests.
- Teenagers need a secure base from which to explore the world.
- Have people you trust to share the journey with you.
- Communicate love – teenagers need to know that they are loved unconditionally.

Running the session

10 min Welcome

Welcome everyone back and reintroduce yourself and your co-leader, if you have one. Ask how everyone's week has been.

4 min Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons introduces the main themes.

This leads into:

2 min 'Word on the street' (Video)

We asked young people on the street: "Do you still need your parents?"

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ Do your teenagers act as though they still need you? Either way, how does this make you feel?
- ❷ In what ways do you think your teenagers do still need you?

2 min 'The Parentalk family' (Video)

The *Parentalk* parents don't feel appreciated by their teenagers.

This leads into:

8 min 'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Family interviews: Parents and teenagers discuss this session's themes.

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ Do you feel appreciated by your teenagers?
- ❷ What kind of activities help you connect with your teenager?
- ❸ When do you find it hardest to connect as a family? How does it make you feel when you lose that connection?
- ❹ What steps can you take to improve that connection with your teenager?

10 min Break

2 min 'My story' (Video)

One mum who feels her teenage son has withdrawn from family life.

Pause the video.

6 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ Why do you think teenagers might withdraw from connecting with their parents?
- ❷ How does it impact the family dynamic if one member of the family disconnects?
- ❸ How might family time look different during your child's teenage years? Is there a way to encourage family time whilst also allowing them time to do their own thing?

12 min Presenter discussion (Video)

Katharine Hill, Krish Kandiah and Sarah Abell discuss the issues raised in 'My story'. This includes the following points:

- Ways to stay connected and develop a positive relationship with your teenager.
- As parents, we need to be 'base camp' for our teenagers.
- The importance of unconditional love.
- The 5 Love Languages®.
- Have people you trust to share the journey with you.

Pause the video.

20 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ① What do you think of the idea of everyone having their own 'love language'? Are you able to identify your own/ your teenager's love language?
- ① What one thing could you do this week to show your teenager that you love them?
- ① What activity could you do together with your teenager to help you stay connected?
- ① Suggest that parents take the online quiz to discover their own love language and then see if their teenager will take the quiz too. 5lovelanguages.com/profile

4 min Conclusion (Video)

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes of the session.

Play the video to the end.

10 min 'The one thing...'

After each parent has had the chance to share 'The one thing', thank everyone for coming and for their contribution to the discussion. Let them know the time and date of the next session and tell them the theme for Session 3 will be 'Identity.' Remember to end on an upbeat note with a word of encouragement.

Session 3: Identity

Overview

Today's young people live in a fast-paced, high-stress world that has expectations of what they should achieve and how they should look. Teenagers have a strong need to fit in and be accepted by their peers – their lives can easily be defined by the number of likes and followers they have on social media. As parents, we need to help them to discover their own skills and strengths and build their own identity without overwhelming them with the pressure to succeed.

Key learning points for this session:

- Teenagers need to know that who you are is more important than what you look like.
- We must try to understand their world.
- We need to help them discover their strengths.
- Affirmation and encouragement are vitally important.
- Parents shouldn't force their own expectations and identity onto their children.
- Parents can have the biggest influence on a teenager's self-esteem.

Running the session

10 min Welcome

Welcome everyone back and ask if they were able to put into practice anything you talked about last week.

4 min Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons introduces the main themes.

This leads into:

2 min 'Word on the street' (Video)

We asked young people on the street: "Whose opinion matters to you most – your friends' or your parents'?"

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❓ Why do you think identity is such a big issue for teenagers?

- ❓ Whose opinion do you think matters most to your teenager, yours or their peers? Why do you think this is?
- ❓ What factors influence how a teenager feels about themselves?

2 min 'The Parentalk family' (Video)

The *Parentalk* parents attempt to make sense of their teenager's identity.

This leads into:

8 min 'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Family interviews: Parents and teenagers discuss this session's themes.

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❓ How much do your teenagers care about self-image?
- ❓ Has anyone's teenager been bullied? What helped them get through this time?
- ❓ Do you ever put pressure on your children to succeed?

10 min Break

2 min 'My story' (Video)

One mum's story of her concern for her teenage daughter who is struggling to find her identity.

Pause the video.

6 min **'Talk about'**

Discussion questions

- ❶ In what ways do you relate to this mum's experience?
- ❷ What can you do to help a troubled teenager feel that they are fully accepted for who they are at home?

12 min **Presenter discussion (Video)**

Katharine Hill, Carrie Grant and Paul Francis discuss the issues raised in 'My story'. This includes the following points:

- The teenage years are a time when young people are trying to discover their identity.
- Society puts pressure on our teenagers to be popular, attractive, famous ... how can parents help their teenagers work through this?
- Not all children are the same – recognise the uniqueness of each young person.
- Help your child to discover their own unique strengths.
- Affirmation, encouragement and positive feedback are really important for your teenager's self esteem.

Pause the video.

20 min **'Talk about'**

Discussion questions

- ❶ As your teenager struggles to find their identity, how can you help them discover who they are?
- ❷ What sort of past experiences from your own life could you helpfully share with your teenager?
- ❸ After hearing the discussion is there anything you might change about how you comment on the way your teenager looks?
- ❹ What is your teenager good at? How can you encourage them in this?

- ❶ Do you know much about the online world where your teenager interacts, and how this makes them feel?
- ❷ Share ideas in your group about how to best influence your teenager and their online relationships.
- ❸ What could you say to your teenager this week that would help them feel good about their identity?

4 min **Conclusion (Video)**

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes of the session.

Play the video to the end.

10 min **'The one thing...'**

After each parent has had the opportunity to share 'The one thing', thank everyone for coming and for their contribution to the discussion. Let them know the time and date of the next session and tell them the theme for Session 4 will be 'Communication and conflict.' Remember to end on an upbeat note with a word of encouragement.

Session 4: Communication and conflict

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Overview

Communication seems to dry up during adolescence, which is why some people call this the 'grunt stage'. Communicating with teenagers can feel like 'treading on eggshells'! However, their desire for emotional space is a natural part of their growing independence. Sometimes our teenagers' wishes and ours do not coincide and this can lead to conflict. There are always two sides to conflict – how the parent sees the issue and how the young person sees it. Parents need to try their best to understand their teenager's point of view and be willing to negotiate.

Key learning points for this session:

- Communication can be difficult during the teenage years.
- Take opportunities to talk to and listen to your teenager.
- An assertive parenting style is the most effective way of parenting teenagers.
- Where possible, negotiate boundaries.
- Choose your battles and let go of the things that are less important to you.
- Set realistic consequences and follow through on sanctions.

Running the session

10 min Welcome

Welcome everyone back and ask if they were able to put into practice anything you talked about last week.

4 min Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons introduces the main themes.

This leads into:

2 min 'Word on the street' (Video)

We asked young people on the street: "Can you talk to your parents about everything?"

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ Do you find it hard to communicate with your teenagers? If so, why do you think that is?

- ❷ Do your teenagers talk to you about everything? How do you feel about them having topics which they consider 'private'?
- ❸ When and where are your teenagers most likely to open up to you?

2 min 'The Parentalk family' (Video)

The *Parentalk* parents decide it's time to tidy their son's bedroom!

This leads into:

8 min 'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Family interviews: Parents and teenagers discuss this session's themes.

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ What are the issues that create conflict in your home?
- ❷ What are the most important issues for you, and which ones do you really take a stand on?
- ❸ What do you find it hard to talk about that you feel you should be talking about with your teenager? Share ideas in the group on how to improve this communication.

10 min Break

2 min 'My story' (Video)

One dad's story of communicating with an unresponsive daughter and the challenge of seizing the opportunity at times when she seems willing to talk.

Pause the video.

6 min **'Talk about'**

Discussion questions

- ④ In what ways do you relate to this dad's experience?
- ④ How has the way you communicate with your teenager changed as they've gotten older? How have you had to adapt as a parent?

12 min **Presenter discussion (Video)**

Katharine Hill, Wendy Jones and Philip Jinadu discuss the issues raised in 'My story'. This includes the following points:

- Most parents and teenagers experience conflict.
- Don't give up talking to them.
- Think about your parenting style.
- Learn to negotiate boundaries with your teenager.
- Set realistic consequences and follow through on sanctions when necessary.
- What is 'normal' teenager anger, and when to look for extra help.
- Saying sorry and forgiveness.

Pause the video.

20 min **'Talk about'**

Discussion questions

- ④ What signal does your teenager give to let you know that they do/don't want to talk?
- ④ What sort of parenting style do you most identify with? If you share the parenting with a partner, is their style the same as yours or different?
- ④ Which boundaries have you modified and negotiated as your children have gotten older? How did that feel? Share ideas on the best way to make these changes.

- ④ What consequences or rewards do you use to encourage your teenagers to stick within set boundaries?
- ④ Admitting you're wrong can sometimes strengthen relationships – is there something that you need to apologise to your teenager about?

4 min **Conclusion (Video)**

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes of the session.

Play the video to the end.

10 min **'The one thing...'**

After each parent has had the opportunity to share 'The one thing', thank everyone for coming and for their contribution to the discussion. Let them know the time and date of the next session and tell them the theme for Session 5 will be 'Big pressures ... good choices.' Remember to end on an upbeat note with a word of encouragement.

Session 5: Big pressures ... good choices

Overview

Teenagers have all sorts of different issues on their minds. Many of those require them to make choices or decisions, and we want these to be wise and positive ones. During the teenage years we know that friends and peers become very important to our children. They want to belong to a group and sometimes this can lead to them making unhealthy lifestyle choices. We may get the impression they take no notice of us – they may even say as much – but research shows that teenagers value their parents' views, and trust them. It just might not look like it sometimes! But we are still able to influence them.

Key learning points for this session:

- Be intentional about understanding the 'big pressures' your teen faces (e.g. sex, alcohol, the internet, pornography, drugs, bullying).
- Teenagers can appear to take no notice of us, but they do want to know what we think.
- Provide ways for your teenager to avoid unhealthy behaviour without losing face.
- Pass on your values and help teenagers to make good choices.

Running the session

10 min Welcome

Welcome everyone back and ask if they were able to put into practice anything you talked about last week.

4 min Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons introduces the main themes.

This leads into:

2 min 'Word on the street' (Video)

We asked young people on the street: "Was it easier for your parents when they were teenagers?"

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ How different are the pressures teenagers face today compared to what you faced?

- ❷ What are some of the biggest issues that young people face today?
- ❸ What are the particular challenges that your teenager is facing right now?

2 min 'The Parentalk family' (Video)

The *Parentalk* dad's embarrassing attempt to talk to his son about sex.

This leads into:

8 min 'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Family interviews: Parents and teenagers discuss this session's themes.

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ What issues do you worry about most as a parent? How valid do you think these worries are?
- ❷ How do you feel about talking to your teenagers about the big issues? Share ideas on how to start difficult conversations.
- ❸ Have you tried to pass on your own values to your teenager (e.g. on alcohol, sex, the way you treat people)? What have you found are the best ways to communicate your values?

10 min Break

2 min 'My story' (Video)

One mum tells how her daughter got in with the wrong crowd.

Pause the video.

6 min **'Talk about'**

Discussion questions

- ❶ In what ways do you relate to this mum's experience?
- ❷ Has your own teenager been through a 'messy stage'? If so what helped both them and yourself during this time?
- ❸ Do you try and influence who your teenager spends time with? How successful has that been?

12 min **Presenter discussion (Video)**

Katharine Hill, Rachel Gardner and Jason Royce discuss some of the issues that have been raised in 'My story'. This includes the following points:

- Identifying some of the common pressures on our teenagers.
- The impact of peer pressure.
- Parents need to try to understand the world their teenagers live in.
- Teenagers can appear to take no notice of their parents, but in reality they do want to know what their parents think – nothing out-impacts a parent.
- Let them know you're always there for them.
- Give them a 'power mentality' – they need to know they always have a choice.
- Pass on your values and help your teenager to make good choices.
- If parents are struggling with a teenager's extreme or risky behaviour they may need to seek professional help.*

Pause the video.

20 min **'Talk about'**

Discussion questions:

- ❶ What did you relate to, or what interested you most, in the story or the discussion? Why?

- ❷ In what ways can you encourage your teenager to 'practice' making good decisions within the safety of the home?
- ❸ How can you help your teenager develop a 'power mentality' i.e. recognise that they always have a choice?
- ❹ Where might you go for help if your teenager is engaging in risky behaviour?
- ❺ What 'good choices' might your teenager need to make in the online world? How can you help them make these good choices?
- ❻ How can you help your teenager make good choices in relationships?
- ❼ Is there a discussion you need to have with your teenager this week? Share ideas on how to approach this.

4 min **Conclusion (Video)**

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes of the session.

Play the video to the end.

10 min **'The one thing...'**

After each parent has had the opportunity to share 'The one thing', thank everyone for coming and for their contribution to the discussion. Let them know the time and date of the next session and tell them the theme for Session 6 will be 'Letting go.' Remember to end on an upbeat note with a word of encouragement.

*If a parent feels they may need professional help, their GP is a good starting point. You can also refer to some of the specialist organisations on Care for the Family's list of parent support organisations at cff.org.uk/parenting

Session 6: Letting go

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Overview

As parents we need to help our children navigate their way through their teenage years and create in them the capacity to cope with whatever life may throw at them. There comes a point when we need to acknowledge that all we can do is counsel our children and trust that the foundation we have built will stand them in good stead. Letting go can be incredibly hard – and in truth they never stop being our ‘children’ – but it is vital.

Key learning points for this session:

- Moving from 'controller' to 'consultant'.
- Hand over control bit by bit.
- Don't be a 'helicopter' parent.
- All young people need to experience challenge or adventure.
- Teenagers need to learn how to cope with adverse circumstances.
- Look after your own relationships.

Running the session

10 min Welcome

Welcome everyone back and ask if they were able to put into practice anything you talked about last week.

4 min Introduction (Video)

Rob Parsons introduces the main themes.

This leads into:

2 min 'Word on the street' (Video)

We asked young people on the street: "How independent do your parents let you be?"

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- 🗣️ How much freedom do you let your teenagers have?

- 🗣️ In what areas do you find it hardest to 'let go'?
- 🗣️ Do you find it difficult to let them 'learn the hard way'?
- 🗣️ What mistakes have your teenagers already learnt from?

2 min 'The Parentalk family' (Video)

The *Parentalk* parents are a little overprotective when their teenager goes to meet friends.

This leads into:

8 min 'Telling it like it is' (Video)

Family interviews: Parents and teenagers discuss this session's themes.

Pause the video.

15 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- 🗣️ How much responsibility do you give your teenagers?
- 🗣️ What choices do you still make for them?
- 🗣️ How do you feel about your teenager growing up?
- 🗣️ How do you feel about the changes in your role as a parent as your teenagers become more independent?

10 min Break

2 min 'My story' (Video)

One mum's story of her struggle to let go as her teenagers were growing up.

Pause the video.

6 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ In what ways do you relate to this mum's experience?
- ❷ If your children are younger how does this discussion about 'letting them go' make you feel?

12 min Presenter discussion (Video)

Katharine Hill, Caroline Bradley and Mark Chester discuss some of the issues that have been raised in 'My story'. This includes the following points:

- Letting go of our children is hard. We still love them as much, but we need to allow them to become independent.
- Don't be a 'helicopter' parent.
- Young people need to have adventure.
- The teenage years are a time for exploring and developing resilience.
- As parents we need to hand over control bit by bit.
- Teenagers need to learn how to make their own decisions.
- Teens need to be accountable for their decisions and actions.

Pause the video.

20 min 'Talk about'

Discussion questions

- ❶ What did you relate to, or what interested you most, in the story or the discussion? Why?
- ❷ If your natural tendency is to be a 'helicopter' parent, how do you think you could change?
- ❸ If your child faces additional challenges, how do you go about giving them more independence, whilst keeping them safe?
- ❹ If you're parenting as a couple, how can you look after your own relationship during your child's teenage years?

- ❶ Do you feel your teenager will be ready to leave home when the time comes? What things do they still need to learn?
- ❷ What decisions could you let your teenager make this week that would help them learn to be more independent and take responsibility for what happens?

4 min Conclusion (Video)

Rob Parsons summarises the main themes of the session and also looks back at some of the topics covered in the whole of *Parentalk – The Teenage Years*.

Play to the end.

10 min 'The one thing...'

After each parent has had the opportunity to share 'The one thing', thank everyone for coming along to *Parentalk – The Teenage Years*. Mention some of the things the group has found useful and (hopefully) some of the fun times you've had. Remember to end on an upbeat note with a word of encouragement.

- ❶ What have you found most useful about *Parentalk – The Teenage Years*?
- ❷ What will you do differently as a result of this course?

Feedback

We would value feedback from the parents in your group and you can download evaluation forms when you register your course at: cff.org.uk/parentalk. Alternatively ask them to go to: surveymonkey.com/r/parentalk-teens

Further support for parents

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Thank you

We hope you've enjoyed running *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* and helping to build stronger, happier families. The practical and positive ways of parenting that have been highlighted in the six sessions make a real difference to both parents and their children – an investment in their relationships that has a lasting value. Thank you on behalf of the families for running this course.

Some mums and dads may want to explore parenting further and Care for the Family has a wide range of resources and events to support them. There are articles and personal stories on our website for parents, and also help for couples to keep their relationships strong. You can find out more at cff.org.uk.

Courses

Our *Time Out for Parents – The Teenage Years* course is suitable for those mums and dads who have done *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* and would now like to attend a more in-depth parenting course. The relaxed and informal sessions are run by experienced and trained facilitators, and give parents the tools to make good decisions about how they want bring up their children. Find out more about the *Time*

Out for Parents – The Teenage Years course at cff.org.uk/courses. To find out how you can be trained to deliver our *Time Out for Parents* courses, visit cff.org.uk/training.

Telephone befrienders

Our specially trained volunteer befrienders support bereaved parents, parents of children with additional needs, and those who have been widowed young. All our befrienders have personal experience in their area of support and this service is free of charge.

Take a Break holidays

Multi-activity breaks for single parents and their children designed to strengthen relationships are run at centres around the UK.

Events

Different Care for the Family events are regularly held around the country to support and strengthen relationships and family life.

Resources

A wide range of books and videos is available including the best-selling *Sixty Minute ...* series of books on family life from Care for the Family's founder and chairman, Rob Parsons, OBE.

For further information about Care for the Family's resources and events please call us on 029 2081 0800, email us at mail@cff.org.uk or visit our website at: cff.org.uk

Parent support organisations

Dad Info

Advice for parents from a dad's perspective. dad.info

Family Lives

A national charity providing help and support on family life. familylives.org.uk

Mumsnet

Information and advice for parents. mumsnet.com

Gingerbread

Advice and support for single parents. gingerbread.org.uk

Contact a Family

A national charity supporting the families of children with a disability. cafamily.org.uk

CoramBAAF

Information, resources, training and family finding services, plus links to adoption and fostering agencies. corambaaf.org.uk

Happy Steps

Research and resources for those parenting within stepfamilies. happysteps.co.uk

Young Minds

Committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. youngminds.org.uk

Thinkuknow

Online support and advice for parents, carers and children about websites, mobiles and new technology. thinkuknow.co.uk

Internet Matters

Information and advice to help parents keep their children safe online. internetmatters.org

FRANK

The website for the government's drugs information campaign. talktofrank.com

Drinkaware

Aims to change the UK's drinking habits for the better, with a section especially for parents. drinkaware.co.uk

Download and print this list from our website at: cff.org.uk/parenting



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