Discussion Guide
TODAY'S TEENS #3
"Is Everybody Going?"

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Instructions to Discussion Leaders

This guide is designed as an aid to discussion leaders who are presenting the Collage film “Today’s Teens #3: Is Everybody Going?”

There are two topics selected from the film developed very briefly as a reminder of the points made in the film. Following each there is a question designed for group discussion. Allow the group time to consider answers after you have read the introductory statement and given the question. It would be helpful to put the question on the chalkboard or newsprint. Buzz sessions may be the most useful way to bring out the thinking of all members.

After you have given the participants ample time to share their ideas you may want to use the points (.) indicated as significant ideas related to the question in a total group discussion period.
Childhood is for Children; Adulthood is for Adults

While a teenager is neither a child nor yet an adult he is in many ways still a child and at other times very much an adult. Consequently parents are often baffled as to just what activities are appropriate for teens. Unless extreme, childlike interests do not concern them as does adult behavior. Parents often do not like to see their children grow away from them and resist evidence of their children’s growing up to more adult like activities.

Our society often pushes youth into adult behavior. Today’s market provides teen-agers with the grown-up look; clothes and cosmetics are urged on them. Some parents in their anxiety to help their children, especially girls, gain popularity plan events that often tend to imitate adult experiences. Peer group pressures force young people to want activities they might not otherwise choose, or even think to want.

**Question 1)** What does a parent consider when an early teen (13-14) receives an invitation to an activity they consider too advanced (formal dance)?

- Young people are maturing earlier than did their forefathers. Physically boys and girls reach puberty a year or two earlier than did their grandparents.
- Socially young people are provided with infinitely wider experiences through mobility and more communication than even their parents had opportunity to experience.
- There is considerable variation among boys and among girls in their rate of growth and maturation. This means a parent must consider this question on an individual basis.
- Girls of 13 are nearly two years older than boys of 13 when we consider development age.

**Question 2)** How can a parent best handle the plea “But everybody is going--Why can’t I go?”

- Is everybody going--or do they just hope to? Or is this a tactic to pressure parents.
- If everybody in her peer group is actually going, parents cannot ignore the importance of the group to the teen and cannot satisfactorily deal with the question by ridicule or minimizing its significance.
- How many parents have encouraged their teenager to identify with a peer group in which everybody does seem to be more advanced in social development?
- It may be helpful to point out to teens that everybody is not really everybody at all but those important to them.
- If everybody is really going parents may need to re-evaluate their own point of view in the light of this fact. This does not necessarily mean that they will modify the family position but may give it a second look to be sure it is important enough to stand on.

**When Parents Need To Say "No"

Parents will at times feel they need to say “no” to these requests. At the age of 13-14 a teen needs the experience of Confrontation with parents. He needs to confront the parents and learn that they care enough to put up limits and hold them. The temporary disappointment is mild in exchange for the kind of security he gets. He is in a period when the restraints of childhood create uncertainty as to what he really does want.
This confrontation pattern is most effective when its occurrence is infrequent and when the incident over which it occurs is significant. Open and free communication between parents is conducive to understanding and minimizes need for the development of issues.

Parents can help minimize the development of issues leading to confrontation by helping the teen get some perspective on life. Some parents emphasize appearance, and popularity for today and ignore long-run goals. Parents who talk to their teens about the kind of men or women they want to become and share the ideas on values and goals have a better basis for communication when issues develop.

Question 3) How to best handle confrontation situations when they do occur?

. Firm, yet reasonable, behavior gets the best results. Quiet firmness, devoid of defensive argumentation, is effective. Acceptance of the teen’s ideas as being worthy of respect is helpful.

. A definite and clearly stated point of view minimizes misunderstanding.

. Acceptance of feelings of the young teen is not the same as giving in to the pressures for what he wants to do. It is helpful to recognize the disappointment or even resentment, and to avoid making him feel guilty for having the feelings—and pressing them. This acceptance must be genuine or matters are made worse. Consequently, “ground rules” for feeling expression must be established.

. Endless argument is pointless. The time comes to end it. Parents may confuse disagreement with lack of acceptance. A teen may continue to disagree when he really has accepted the idea.

. Reminder: The spoiled child is the child of chicken-hearted parents: too chicken-hearted to say no or too chicken-hearted to say yes.

Pressures From Other Adults

Parents, especially mothers, may push their daughters into early adult like situations in their anxiety to promote the daughter’s popularity. Thus other parents are placed in a position of acceding to this pressure or run the risk of appearing to censor the judgement of other parents—who are likely to be friends or acquaintances. This may put the parent in the same position in relation to her peers as the daughter is with hers.

Question 4) How deal with pressures from other parents?

. Parents may be forced in a choice between what is best for the teen and what is most comfortable for themselves.

. The teen will appreciate the parent whose stand is reasonable and just—especially when it requires that parent to face a similar problem to what the teen is facing—peer pressures.

. Long-run growth and development is encouraged when the teen feels his family is seen as consistently maintaining a definite style of life. This gives him a sense of meaning of family solidarity.

. Realistically, family positions showing marked deviation from most others may of course be more difficult to maintain.

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