Parent Goal 6: Open Communication

I. Eye-Catcher

Human Knot: Group gets tangled into a human knot and has to figure out how to get out of the knot without letting go of each others’ hands (see Appendix 6A)

II. Mini Lecture/Discussion ((PowerPoint slides can be found on the CD; see speaker notes in the slide show for additional information).

III. In-session Activities:
   A. Duplo Activity - see Appendix 6B
   B. Poison Peanut Butter Pit – see Appendix 6C
   C. Communication Role Plays- see Appendix 6D

IV. Wrap-up: Review the main points of the session; check for understanding and questions (it can be useful to have the group generate the main points and for the facilitator to write them down on a flip chart or overhead). The main points covered include: How adults can be effective communicators with teens; what parents can do to talk openly with their teens; why good parent-teen communication matters for teens; why it is important for parents to listen to their teens, how good communication promotes positive interactions among parents and teens.

V. Handouts: StayConnected Tip card (see Appendix 6E); Principle of Parenting (HE780) – Communicating with Your Teen (obtain copies from Auburn Campus Extension Publications or you can use electronic copies found at: http://www.aces.edu/department/extcomm/publications/he/he-780/pdf/he-780.pdf
VI. Out of session Activities:
Do one of the StayConnected activities that focus on communication with your teen:

- Night on the Town (AS01)
- Movie Marathon (AS02)
- Book Group (AS06)
- Pet Care and Training (AS08)
- Garden (AS09)
- Message Center (AS11)
- Mailbox (AS13)
- Life Seminars (AS14)
- Camping Trip (AS15)
- Game Night (AS16)
- A Day at the Park (AS17)
- A Puzzling Possibility (AS18)
- Memory Night (AS19)
- Building (AS20)
- Parent School/Teen Work (AS21)

VII. Evaluation (see Appendix 6F)
Appendix 6A
HUMAN KNOT

The main goal of this activity is to illustrate how parent/teen communication requires being able to stay connected while we work together to solve problems. As we solve problems we have to be aware of how our actions affect each other and to be sensitive to each other’s needs and views. No materials are needed.

Divide into groups of 6-10 people plus a facilitator. Have Participants get in a circle and then reach across and take the hands of two different people standing on the other side of the circle. Tell them that they cannot hold hands with the person next to them (when everyone has grabbed hands you have a human knot). The challenge is to untangle the knot without letting go of each others’ hands. Remind participants to take their time and to make sure no one gets their arm twisted in a way that hurts. When the knot is untangled, the facilitator asks:

“How did it feel to be in the human knot?”
“What did you do to untangle the human knot?”
“How did you make sure no one got hurt?”
“What is an example in real life when everyone in the family depends on each other to do their part?”

“In real life most of what we experience involves people affecting each others’ lives. When we make decisions for ourselves we have to think about how those decisions affect others. When we communicate with our teens, we have to share our views and concerns, and also listen to their views and concerns.”
Appendix 6B
DUPLO ACTIVITY

The main purpose of this activity is to illustrate the importance of direct, clear communication and to emphasize the value of what both parent and teens have to contribute to the conversation. Materials needed: Duplo blocks – a few more than will be needed to construct the object indicated by the clues should be given to the group. Each group member should receive a clue (one set of 6 clues is needed for each group).

1. Have participants get into groups of 4-6. Ask them to sit in a circle around a table facing each other.

2. Hand each group some duplo blocks (more than they will need) - ensure that they do have the blocks they do need to satisfy the clues.

3. Hand each member a clue (if less then 6 people in group, some will have to get 2 clues). Ask the participants not to let anyone see their clues and not to talk with each other.

4. Let members know that they will be building something that satisfies all of their clues. Explain what “connectors” are (everything else in the clues should make sense). Tell them they should start building their group object, but they may not talk or show their clue. Instead they must use gestures to indicate what they want.

5. After 5 minutes have passed, tell groups that they may talk to each other, BUT they may not say what their clue is or show their clue to anyone. They can tell others whether or not their clue is satisfied.

6. After 5 more minutes have passed, tell group that they may show their clues to each other and make sure the object satisfies all of them.

Once all groups have built an object that satisfies the clues - put the objects up front for all to see. Note that they all look a little different, but they all satisfy the same set of clues. Move to the “processing stage”

PROCESS QUESTIONS

Describe What Happened and How it Felt

1. What was your group trying to accomplish?

2. What were some things you observed going on while your team was trying to accomplish the task?

3. What were some feelings you had while trying to accomplish the task?
Analyze and Reflect on What Happened

1. What were some things that you or others did to help your team accomplish the task?
2. What were some things that got in the way of accomplishing the task?
3. What would have made it easier to accomplish your task?

Relate Task to Other Situations

1. How does this task relate to experiences you have had communicating with other people?
2. How does this task relate to communication between parents and teens?

Apply Information Learned to Materials and Programs for Parents and Teens

1. How does the task help you think about the kinds of things needed to strengthen parent-teen communication?
2. How might you use what you learned from doing this task in your relationship with your own children to enhance your communication with each other?

CLUES FOR THE DUPLO ACTIVITY
(FEEL FREE TO CHANGE THE COLORS TO FIT THE COLORS IN THE SET OF DUPLOS YOU HAVE).

Only 2 of the blocks are the same color

For 3 of the blocks you use, they will be stacked directly on one another and all of their sides will be perfectly aligned.

The block that is exactly in the middle of the stack is red

Whenever blocks are connected, four connectors will be used (no more, no less)

When you are finished, exactly 12 connectors will be exposed, 8 of which must be green

One of the blocks must be yellow
The goal of this activity is to promote the experience of working together to deal with a challenge that a family might face and to promote the development of creative alternatives when dealing with challenges. Materials needed include: Masking Tape to mark the beginning and the end of the poison peanut butter pit. Three 3-foot long (1” thickness x 4” width) wooden planks. Number and length of planks will need to vary according to how many participants are in the group. All of the group members should be able to fit onto two planks when standing sideways.

Put tape on the floor to indicate the beginning of the poison peanut butter pit. The end of the pit is the wall at the far side of the room; the distance should be approximately 16-24 feet. Have participants get into teams of 5 people and 1-2 “coaches”. Facilitator says the following: “Your job is to get all of your team safely across the poison peanut butter pit. To do this, you have these 3 planks. While you are crossing the pit, all of the planks must be in contact with at least one person (this is rule #1). In contact means touching a person’s hand or foot. If a plank is let go of and no one is touching it, it quickly sinks into the poison peanut butter pit. Rule # 2 is: No one can allow themselves to touch the poison peanut butter pit. If a person’s hand, foot, or other body part touches the pit (i.e., the floor or any nearby structures) while you are crossing, the whole team has to start all over again. You must rely on each other to keep your balance and to make sure that all of the planks are in contact with at least one person. You must make sure that everyone on your team safely crosses the poison peanut butter pit (rule # 3). If a team is having difficulty getting across after several tries, have them select one person to be the ‘coach.’ The coach is immune to the perils of the poison peanut butter pit and can walk beside the team provide guiding comments (but cannot touch any of the team members) as the team makes its way across the pit.”

RULES

1. All of the planks must be in contact with at least one person.

2. No one can touch the poison peanut butter pit. If a person’s hand, foot, or other body part touches the pit the whole team must start over. If your feet are fully on the board and your foot hangs over and touches the floor a little that is OK.

3. Everyone must make it safely across the pit for your team to succeed.
   - Give each team two consecutive tries before moving to the next group. After all groups have tried to cross the pit, have any group that has not succeeded try again. Emphasize the need to take their time and to work together to make sure everyone keeps their balance and all planks are being touched by someone.
   - The job of the coaches is help the other members take their time, remember to keep in contact with all planks, work together, and problem solve.
   - Use masking tape to mark how far a team gets with each of their turns.
Process Questions

- How did you manage to get your team across the poison peanut butter pit?

- What was the hardest part about trying to get across the pit?

- When you and your teen face a challenge in real life, how does slowing down and cooperating with each other help you deal with the problem?
Appendix 6D
Communication Role Plays

Communication Role Plays

The overall purpose of the role plays are to facilitate group members’ ability to distinguish between aggressive, assertive and nonassertive communication and to understand the importance of using assertive communication with teens and encouraging teens to use assertive communication with other teens, as well as adults. Materials needed include: role play descriptions; create small signs containing the words “assertive, “nonassertive” “aggressive” for each participant.

Preparation for the Role Plays

Prior to activity, facilitators memorize definitions of nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive communication (use note cards if needed).

At the start of the activity, facilitators present students with examples of each style of communication.

**Nonassertive:**

Act out the following scene demonstrating nonassertive communication. Prior to the role play, tell the participants to watch the facilitator (i.e., “focal parent”) that will be communicating nonassertively (but do not tell them how the person will communicate) with his/her teen. The person playing the teen should be persistent in trying to get his or her way.

**Situation:** The teen wants to go to a concert. The parent is not comfortable letting the teen go. The parent allows the teen to talk the parent into letting the teen go, even though the parent is not comfortable with this.

After the role play, ask the participants how the focal parent was communicating. Then give the definition of nonassertive.

**Nonassertive:** avoiding saying what you think, feel, want, or believe because...

- You are afraid to risk the consequences
- You don't believe in your own rights
- You don't know how to speak up for yourself
- You think another person’s rights are more important than yours
**Aggressive:**

Now act out the following scene demonstrating aggressive communication.

**Situation:** The teen wants to go to a concert. The parent is not comfortable letting the teen go. The parent gets angry at the teen for even asking and grounds the teen for the weekend, calling the teen “stupid” for even making the request to go to the concert.

After the role play, ask the participants how the focal parent was communicating. Then give the definition of aggressive.

**Aggressive:** saying what you think, feel, want, or believe in ways that deny another person’s right to be treated with respect (anger, meanness, hurtfulness, put-downs, spitefulness, etc).

**Assertive:**

Finally, do the skit one more time, demonstrating assertive communication.

**Situation:** The teen wants to go to a concert. The parent is not comfortable letting the teen go. The parent discusses with the teen reasons why s/he is not comfortable with letting the teen attend the concert. The parent also offers examples of activities that are acceptable and states that in the future, when the teen is older, the teen may be permitted to attend concerts, but not at this time.

After the role play, ask the students how the focal teen was communicating. Provide the definition for assertive:

**Assertive:** saying what you think, feel, want, or believe

- In ways that don’t damage another person’s right to be treated with respect
- In straightforward, nonthreatening ways
- In ways that don’t deny your own rights

Tell participants that they will get to do some role plays demonstrating communication. Divide the participants into 3-4 groups. Tell them they can choose to act out the situation in any way they choose (i.e., the parent is assertive, aggressive or nonassertive). Give each group a role play from the list below:

**Role play topics:**

- Your teen and two of your teen’s friends are nagging you to let the teen go to a party. You feel you need more information about the party before you decide to let the teen go. Decide what kind of information you will need to get from your teen and your teen’s friends, and after getting the information decide whether you will let your teen go. You are free to be assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive.
Your teen is having problems in school. You had a long talk with the teacher this morning and learned that your teen is not turning in homework, sleeping in class, and ignoring the teacher’s requests. It is now the evening and you are sitting down to talk with your teen about the situation. You are free to be assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive.

Your teen borrowed your favorite CD and returns it scratched without saying anything about it. When you attempt to use the CD and find that it doesn’t work, you are angry. How will you handle this? You are free to be assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive.

Your teen has been spending a lot of time with his or her boyfriend/girlfriend. You have noticed that your teen has been brushing off his/her friends because the boyfriend/girlfriend insists that they spend every moment they can together. You are worried about your teen. You decide to talk to your teen about the situation this evening. You are free to be assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive.

You suspect that your teen has been smoking pot (marijuana, weed). You have no direct evidence but you’ve overheard some telephone conversations your teen has had with friends and you think you may have smelled pot on your teen. You decide you need to talk with him/her about your concerns. You are free to be assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive.

You don’t like one of your teen’s friends because you’ve noticed that the friend is sneaky and rude. You are concerned that your teen is being negatively influenced by this friend and decide to discuss this with him/her. You are free to be assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive.

Let each group take turns doing their role play. For all non actors, hand each one a set of 3 cards containing the words: assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive. At the end of each role play, have them hold up their cards indicating which type of communication they observed – briefly ask them why they saw it that way.

After each group has had one turn, if there is time remaining, they can take a second turn. Permit 15 minutes after the role plays to discuss the process questions and complete the module evaluations.

Process:
• Ask parents what the most important aspects of communication with their teens are.
• How does being aggressive in your communication with your teen work against you?
• How does being nonassertive in your communication with your teen work against you?
• How does using assertive communication with your teen help you to get your point across without
  -making your teen feel defensive?
  -making your teen unsure of what you really want?
Appendix 6E
StayConnected Tip card for Goal 6
(Duplicate as many as needed on card stock paper)

Open Communication
- Take time to talk with your teen regularly, not just when you are mad or you need something.
- Listen more than you talk... and pay attention!
- Really listen and value what your teen tells you.
- Let your teen know that s/he can confide and trust in you.
- Praise your teen and give her or him positive encouragement.
- Share your values, concerns and interests.
- Try not to argue with, preach to, criticize, or nag your teen.

Stay Connected
### Appendix 6F

**Parent Goal 6: Open Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County ___________________</th>
<th>Name of Facilitator ________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Marital status: single(never married) married(first marriage) divorced remarried widowed

Parental Status: mother father grandmother grandfather other (please write in) _________________

Race/Ethnicity: Black/African American White/Caucasian Hispanic/Latino Native American Asian American Other (please write in) _________________

How many sons/grandsons do you have____ What are their ages: _________________

How many daughters/granddaughters do you have____ What are their ages: _________________

Please circle the number that indicates how much you enjoyed the activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Human Knot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Duplo activity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poison Peanut Butter Pit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication Role Plays</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please circle the number that indicates what you knew before and after participating in this session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Before the Session</th>
<th>After the Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>A little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand how adults can communicate effectively With teens.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand why keeping the lines of communication open with my teen are important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to keep the lines of communication open with my teen.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what to do if I am having trouble maintaining open communication with my teen.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can be a good listener when my teen needs to talk.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>