Parent Goal 7: Parent-Teen Conflict

[This can be a difficult topic for parents who are having frequent or serious arguments with their teens]

I. Eye-Catcher

Please use one of the following activities at the beginning of your session as an eye-catcher.

1. Video Messages from Stay Connected: Two Views: This clip demonstrates how a parent and a teen can have two different views regarding a topic. If you and your parent were to think about each other’s point of view, this may decrease the number of arguments you have. (See Appendix 7A for process questions).

2. Parenting Wisely*: Problem 5: In this clip, we see both parents and the son arguing over the son’s choice of friends. (Stop clip when the next scene starts). Discuss the different alternatives presented in the clip; ask if parents can think of any other alternatives or how they would modify any of the alternatives presented. (See Appendix 7A for process questions).

3. Parenting Wisely: Problem 6: In this clip, we see a mother and her son arguing over the son’s loud music. Stop clip when the next scene starts). Discuss the different alternatives presented in the clip; ask if parents can think of any other alternatives or how they would modify any of the alternatives presented. (See Appendix 7A for process questions).

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

At end of mini lecture – have parents generate the issues that they seem to be always fighting about with their teens. Let them know we will revisit these later.

*Parenting Wisely videos are available from the Auburn University Extension Office
III. In-session Activities:

A. **Tug of war activity** - The purpose of this activity is to give a “physical” illustration of what often happens during parent-teen conflicts. Materials: A rope that can be used for the tug of war, a flag, masking tape, pre-made signs for the facilitator – see description that follows. Divide group in half and have each half take one side of the rope (have a flag tied in the middle and have a line on the floor for each group where if they get the flag over their line they win. Do the tug of war. While engaged in the tug of war, hold up signs that contain messages for the participants to give the opposing group: “You’re a loser” “You can’t win” “We always know what’s best” “We are right” “We don’t care how you feel” “You have to do it our way”

- **Process** - ask the winners how they feel; ask the losers how they feel. Ask each group how they feel about the other group. When fighting with teens becomes like a tug of war – where you either win or lose - this often leads to greater frustration, more problems, and feeling bad about each other. Is there another way?

B. Show and discuss *Parenting Wisely* clips 5 and/or 6 regarding arguing (if not used as Eyecatcher)

C. Collaborative Problem Solving – a method for helping teens and parents work together to resolve their disagreements (see Appendix 7B)

E. Overcome the Obstacle – a game for generating solutions for tackling typical parent-teen disagreements (see Appendix 7C)

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: the understanding that some parent-teen conflict is normal and promotes healthy teen development; steps can be taken to help parents and teens work out their disagreements: staying calm, listening to each other’s point of view without interrupting, generating possible solutions to the problem, finding a solution that both can live with (accepting that neither will get exactly what they want), trying out the solution for a specified period of time, deciding together if it is working and what, if anything, needs adjusting.

V. Handouts: Stay Connected Tip card (see Appendix 7D); Principles of Parenting (HE781) - Communicating with Your Teen: Negotiation (obtain copies from Auburn Campus Extension Publications or you can use electronic copies found at:
http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/H/HE-0781
VI. **Out of session Activities:** The next time you and your teen are having a fight about something that seems to come up over and over again – see if trying a different (surprising) way of handling it helps make things better. Try using the strategies for engaging your teen when making joint decisions. Practicing with easy situations may make the frustrating ones easier to handle.

VII. **Evaluation** (see Appendix 7E)
Appendix 7A

2 Views:

Questions for Parents:

A. Is this a topic of concern for your family?

B. Describe the two different viewpoints presented in the video.

C. When you experience a similar situation with your teen, can you see your teen’s point of view?

D. Do you think your teen sees your point of view?

E. How do you usually handle the situation of how your teen keeps his/her room (or some other situation where you see things differently)?

F. Does it work? Describe what happens in more detail.

G. Are you able to reach a compromise?

Parenting Wisely

Video Clip #5: Dealing with Child Who Has a Friend Who’s a Bad Influence.

The clip demonstrates who to resolve the issue without forbidding the child from seeing his friend (which would likely result in the child seeing the friend without permission).

Watch Video Clip

The options are:

1. Do not let Kevin hang out with Tim anymore.
2. Tell Kevin your concerns, and ask him to come home immediately after school until his grades improve.
3. Tell Kevin your concerns, ask him to see Tim only at your house, and begin keeping track of his schoolwork.

After watching the video, process with participants the plusses and minuses of each solution. Why is solution 3 the most effective?

Would solution 3 work in your home? Why or why not?

What are other solutions you can think of or have tried that you think would be more effective? Why?
Video Clip #6: Getting Child to Obey Requests and Speak Respectfully to Parents-Loud Music.

This clip demonstrates establishing boundaries and limit setting.

Watch Video Clip

The options are:

1. Let it go this time but vow to take away the boom box the next time it happens.
2. Take away the boom box when he is not home and then discuss the problem when he returns.
3. Be nice and hope he feels bad enough about his threat to leave home that he won’t do it again?

After watching the video, process with participants the plusses and minuses of each solution. Why is solution 2 the most effective?

Why is avoiding problems with our children or trying to bribe our children not effective?

Would solution 2 work in your home? Why or why not?

What are other solutions you can think of or have tried that you think would be more effective? Why?
The goal of this activity is to teach collaborative problem solving and encourage its use with teens. **Collaborative problem solving means that you and your teen are working together to negotiate a solution that you both think is fair. It involves six important steps.**

- **Step 1.** Establish ground rules.
- **Step 2.** Reach mutual understanding.
- **Step 3.** Brainstorm
- **Step 4.** Agree to one or more solutions.
- **Step 5.** Write down your agreement.
- **Step 6.** Set a time for a follow-up discussion to evaluate your progress.

**Revisit parents’ “frequent argument topics” on list.** Have them select some frequent argument topics to see if they practice collaborative problem solving for handling these issues. If collaborative problem solving does not seem doable, have these parents write down what the behavior is that they don’t like, how they feel about it, and why. Then have them list different possible ways that they can think of that could help to fix the problem. This could be used as a written way to communicate with the teen. If given to the teen, it should be prefaced with – I want to know what you think, if you understand why I’m upset, and if you like any of my ideas or if you have other suggestions. This may open the door to actual discussion.
Appendix 7C
Overcome the Obstacle

The purpose of this activity is to encourage brainstorming when it comes to dealing with common conflicts between parents and teens. Materials needed include 8 giant post-its and markers. Set up: Write the following issues at the top of separate giant post-its (poster size) and then place the post-its around the room.

Topics:

- Disagreeing with your teen about: CURFEW
- Disagreeing with your teen about: YOUR TEEN’S HOUSEHOLD CHORES
- Disagreeing with your teen about: YOUR TEEN’S FRIENDS
- Disagreeing with your teen about: YOUR TEEN’S BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND
- Disagreeing with your teen about: THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOUR TEEN SPENDS STUDYING
- Disagreeing with your teen about: HOW YOUR TEEN SPENDS HIS/HER TIME ON THE WEEKEND
- Disagreeing with your teen about: HOW MUCH TIME YOUR TEEN SPENDS TALKING ON THE PHONE
- Disagreeing with your teen about: HOW YOUR TEEN KEEPS HIS/HER ROOM

Divide participants into groups of 3-4 people. Give each team a different color marker. Have each team go from issue to issue, writing down 1-2 ways the situation could be handled. They are not allowed to duplicate a solution that another team has already written on the post-it. When the teams have finished (or time is up, if you decide to set a time limit), review the different solutions that the participants have written down. Ask which ones they think will be most effective and why. Make a master list of the issues and solutions that you can hand out at the next meeting or mail to participants (if this is their last session).
Appendix 7D
StayConnected Tip card for Goal 7
(Duplicate as many as needed on card stock paper)

**Parent-Teen Fighting**

*If you and your teen are engaged in a conflict that needs to be resolved:*
- Work it out by talking and listening.
- Consider ways you have solved problems in the past, would any of those work now?
- Be willing to experiment with potential solutions.
- If you need it, get additional help from a family member or friend that both of you respect.
- Stay committed to finding a way to work it out.
- Make a little progress at a time.
Appendix 7E
Parent Goal 7: Parent-Teen Conflict

County_________________   Name of Facilitator_________________________

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Opening Videos</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Tug of War</td>
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<td>3. Parenting Wisely video</td>
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<td>4. Collaborative Problem Solving activity</td>
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<td>5. Overcome the Obstacle</td>
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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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand why some parent-teen conflict is normal and can promote positive teen development</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know steps to take to work out disagreements with my teen.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can work out disagreements with my teen in a positive way.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can identify issues that I should ignore rather than argue about with my teen.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know who to call for help if I cannot work out a serious conflict with my teen.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>