Teen Goal 8: Let’s Talk About ....

Today’s session is about learning to discuss sensitive topics (for example, sex, birth control, drugs) with your parents.

During this session, you may be discussing topics that many participants may not feel comfortable with, especially if the participants do not know one another.

I: Eye-catcher

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

1. Either/Or Game- In the appendix there is a list of questions about whether the students would rather ask their parents about a sensitive issue and risk being embarrassed or tell them bad news (See Appendix 8A for questions).

2. Video Messages from Stay-Connected:
   a. Be Available: daughter: demonstrates a daughter practicing in front of a mirror how to bring up dating a boy whom her parents may not approve of (i.e., practicing bringing up a sensitive topic).
   b. Be Available: son: demonstrates a son practicing in front of a mirror his feelings regarding the new school and the students that attend. The son feels like the dad won’t care about the son's feelings (i.e., practicing bringing up a sensitive topic). (See Appendix 8A for Process Questions for both video messages.)

II: Mini-Lecture *

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

Facilitator: Make sure that you transition from the eye-catcher to the mini-lecture even if the mini-lecture does not provide a spot to talk about the eye-catcher.

* See supporting research topic: How to talk about sensitive topics
III: In-session Activities

A. **Tough Topics: What are they?** First, have the participants generate a list of topics they feel are difficult / sensitive to talk over with their parents. (They may call out some of the same examples provided during the mini-lecture.) Next, while the students are calling out different topics, have a volunteer write their answers on a large post-it or flip chart. On a second flip chart, have a volunteer write down the participants’ fears/concerns they have about discussing each of the topics with their parents. (Participants should be calling out their fear / concerns.) Third, have the participants brainstorm ways to deal with these fears/concerns so they can talk with their parents. Feel free to choose whether or not to write this on a separate flip chart. Finally, discuss why it is important to discuss the tough topic with their parent even though they may be scared. (You may want to refer back to the mini-lecture.)

- **Materials Needed:** Large post-it notes, markers
- **Process Questions:** Why is it difficult to talk about contraception with your parents? How does remaining calm help when talking with your parents? Why does practicing before talking with your parents help the conversation flow more smoothly?

B. **Teen Role Models:** Ask for volunteers from your group who feel that they can talk openly with their parents about sensitive topics? Have them explain to the group “how they talk” to their parents.

**Process Questions:** What do you do that makes it easier for you to talk about the sensitive topic with your parents? What kind of relationship do you have with your parents? What kinds of pointers can you give to your fellow group members that will make this discussion easier for them?

- Review effective communication (*see Teen Goal 3*) skills before, during, or after the teens provide suggestions about “how to bring up the sensitive topic”. The goal of this activity is for teens that are having trouble talking with their parents regarding sensitive topics to have some examples to go by and how to use effective communication during the discussion.

C. **Practicing: Learning to bring up the sensitive topic:** Have the group participants break up into pairs. Have each team role-play talking with parents about sensitive topics; one teen starts off as the parent and the other starts off as the teen. After the allotted time, have the teens switch roles so that the other teen can practice bringing up the sensitive topic. Have them start with more comfortable topics. Once they feel comfortable, have them begin working on more difficult topics. They should pick topics from the list they generated earlier. You may decide to have the teen’s pair up with one teen who finds it easier and one who finds it more difficult to talk with their parents. Provide steps if necessary, but they should try to use some of the suggestions generated earlier (*See Appendix 8D*).
o **See Appendix 8D** for example role-plays. Choose from one of the following three options: (a) Have the students try one of the examples and then create their own, (b) Have two volunteers role-play the examples in front of the entire group and then have the participants generate their own, or (c) Have each of the participants come up with their own role-plays without referring to the examples.

o **Process Questions:** What did you learn from practicing? What kinds of tips did you learn from your partner? What should you try to remember when you begin a conversation with your parents about something that is sensitive? Who feels like they could talk with their parents now? Why? Who still feels like it may be difficult to talk with their parents? Why?

D. **Fish Bowl Activity:** Eaves dropping on discussions among teens about parents, and among parents about teens. This activity allows teens to see their parent’s perspective on different issues *(See Appendix 8D)*.

E. **Duplo Blocks Activity:** Effective communication is essential when discussing sensitive topics. This activity allows teens to see how ineffective or no communication can result in misunderstanding and incorrect knowledge *(See Appendix 8D)*.

IV: **Wrap-up** - see last slide of PowerPoint
  o Provide handouts. Explain how to use them at home and when to take a look at them.

V: **Handouts**
  
  • Stay Connected Tip Cards *(See appendix 8E)*

VI: **Out-of-session Activities**

Pick a topic you feel you would like to talk over with your parents. Practice, with a friend you trust, starting up the conversation and what you would like to say to your parents. Go talk with your parents about the topic. If you feel uncomfortable starting with a more difficult topic, pick an easier topic first and see how the conversation goes. Eventually, with open and honest communication, you will be able to start discussing the more difficult topics with your parents.

*Please remember to have participants complete the evaluation form found at the end of this goal. Feel free to change activities as needed before duplicating.*
Appendix 8A: Eye-Catchers

1. Either/Or Game:
   a. Would you rather ask your parents about sex to find out the facts, or not ask them, and then have to tell them that you are pregnant because you did not know about the effects of sexual intercourse?
   b. Would you rather ask your parents about condoms, or have to tell them that you have AIDS or an STD?
   c. Would you rather ask you parents about drugs, or not ask them, try drugs and end up having irreversible effects of being a vegetable for the rest of your life?
   d. Would you rather ask you parents to pick you up from a party because your ride got drunk, or not call and have the hospital call them to tell them you were in a car accident?

2. Be Available:

   **Daughter Process Questions:**
   Have you ever felt this way-- that your parents were not available for you to talk to? If not, what makes it easy to talk with your parents about dating? If yes, what made it difficult to talk with them about dating? Are there other issues that you find difficult to talk about with your parents? How would you like your parents to react when you discuss difficult issues? What would make it easier to talk with your parents about these issues? What could you do differently during these discussions?

   **Son Process Questions:**
   - Is changing schools and teachers sometimes hard?
   - Do you feel that your parents understand your struggles?
   - What do you usually do when you have problems in school?
   - Do you talk with your parents about this?
   - Do you wish they would be more understanding? If so, what would you like them to do differently? What could you do differently?
Appendix 8B: Warning Signals a Drinking Problem is Developing:

You drink more than you used to and tend to gulp your drinks.

You try to have a few extra drinks before or after drinking with others.

You have begun to drink alone.

You are noticeably drunk on important occasions.

You drink the “morning after” to overcome the effects of previous drinking.

You drink to relieve feelings of boredom, depression, anxiety, or inadequacy.

You have begun to drink at certain times, to get through difficult situations, or when you have problems.

You have weekend drinking bouts and Monday hangovers.

You are beginning to lose control of your drinking; you drink more than you planned and get drunk when you did not want to.

You promise to drink less but don’t.

You often regret what you have said or done while drinking.

You are beginning to feel guilty about your drinking.

You are sensitive when others mention your drinking.

You have begun to deny your drinking or lie about it.

You have memory blackouts or pass out while drinking.

Your drinking is affecting your relationship with friends or family.

You have lost time at work or school due to drinking.

You begin to stay away from people who do not drink.


National Resources:
Alcohol Abuse Treatment Centers: 1-800-333-2294
Alcohol Abuse 24 Hour Hotline and Treatment: 1-800-222-0828
Appendix 8C: Tips on What to Do and Not to Do When Someone Says They are Thinking of Suicide

Do:

• Ask the individual if they are thinking about committing suicide.

• Assess the seriousness; ask if they have a plan and what it is. Can they do it? The more serious, the more thought out the plan, the more dangerous the situation becomes.

• Try to persuade the person to get help.

• Stay with the person until help arrives.

• Be a good listener and be supportive without reinforcing their decision.

Don’t:

• Ignore the warning signs.

• Refuse to talk about suicide if the person approaches you about it.

• React with humor, disapproval, or repulsion.

• Give out false reassurances that “everything will be ok.”

• Abandon the individual.
Appendix 8D: In-session Activities

1. Role-play sensitive topics—steps for discussing sensitive topics.
   a. Be open & honest
   b. Explain what you are thinking and feeling
   c. Listen to what your parents are saying
   d. Ask questions, if necessary
   e. Stay calm throughout the conversation

2. Example Role-plays for Sensitive Topics:

   Drug / Alcohol Use / Abuse:

   Jose’: Dad, can we talk about something really important? I would like your advice on something.

   Dad: Of course, what is it?

   Jose’: I think I may have a problem.

   Dad: You do? With what? How can I help?

   Jose’ Don’t get mad. I’ve been going to a lot of parties lately where kids are drinking a lot, and I’m one of those kids. And, I know you don’t want me to be drinking, but I have been. But now, I think I have a problem. I don’t remember what happens after I’ve had a couple of beers and I get sick all of the time. My friends say that I pass out sometimes, but other times they say I start fights with people. I don’t remember doing any of it.

   Dad: Ok. I’m glad that you came to me about this. I want to help you, not to punish you for it. You’ve obviously learned that drinking can cause problems, so let’s focus on getting you some help.

   Jose’ and Dad continue talking until they find a solution. During the whole conversation, Both Jose’ and his dad are calm, open and honest.
Teen Pregnancy:

Trisha: Mom, can we talk? I’ve got something really important that I need to tell you.

Mom: Sure, honey, what is it?

Trisha: Mom, this is really hard for me to tell you. I know that you are going to be upset, but please just listen to me without yelling at me. Ok?

Mom: Trisha, what is it? You’re scaring me.

Trisha: well, umm, Joey and have been having sex and we didn’t use a condom this one time. So, uhh, I’m pregnant now. I’m 2 ½ months along.

Mom: Ok. What do you and Joey both plan on doing? Have you thought about what this means, what can/could happen, and what you are going to do?

Trisha: Not really, mom. I’m scared. I was hoping that you could help me decide what to do.

Mom and Trisha proceed to discuss Trisha’s options. While Mom is very upset, she remains calm. Trisha is open and honest with her Mom, which allows the conversation to progress smoothly.
Fishbowl Activity

- Task Objective: Teen’s discuss questions that will help think about their own and their parent's reactions and perspectives.

- Materials Needed: Slips of paper, pencils

- Divide your group in half. Assign one half to play the teens and the other half to play the parents. Give each group small slips of paper and pencils.

- Ask the teen group to write on the slips of papers different questions they have about parents. For example, “Why do parents *always* have to know where I am?” “Why don’t parents trust us to go with our friends to the beach for the weekend?” “Why don’t parents let us keep *our* rooms the way we want to?”

- Ask the parent group to write down on the slips of paper different questions they have about teens. For example, “Why do teenagers always get so upset about the little things?” “Why can’t teenagers talk honestly about their lives with their parents?” “Why do teenagers always try to get out of doing their chores?”

- When both groups have finished writing their questions, have them fold their questions and place them in a large envelope (have one envelope for the teens’ questions for parents, and another envelope for the parents’ questions for teens). Have one group form their chairs in a small circle; have the other group place their chairs in a larger circle around the other group. Have the group in the center read and respond to the questions while the other group watches without comment.

- For example, if the teen group is in the middle, they will get the envelope containing the parents’ questions for teens. They will take turns reading and responding to the parents’ questions. When the teens finish, they switch places with the parents (parents get in the inner circle and teens sit in the outer circle; the parents respond to the teens’ questions for parents, while the teens watch without commenting).

- When the activity is over, ask the participants to comment on what they observed and what they learned from doing the activity.
**DUPLO ACTIVITY**

The main purpose of this activity is to illustrate the importance of direct, clear communication during conversations regarding sensitive topics.

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 need to satisfy the clues.

3. Hand each member a clue (if there are less than 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 the 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 the groups 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 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 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 Discussions Regarding Sensitive Topics**
1. How does is this task relate to talking about sensitive topics with your parents?
2. How does indirect communication harm your conversation regarding sensitive topics?
3. How can effective communication help your discussion about sensitive topics?

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**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.

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*Here is a simpler version of clues:*

Only 2 of the blocks are the same color.

3 of the blocks must be the small ones with 4 connectors.

The block that is exactly in the middle of the stack is purple.

There must be a total of 5 blocks used (no more, no less).

2 of the blocks must be the large ones with 8 connectors.

One of the blocks must be yellow.
Appendix 8E
Stay Connected Tip card for Goal 8
(Duplicate as many as needed on card stock paper)

Let’s Talk About ....
- Sometimes, it’s hard to talk to your parent(s), or any adult, about sensitive topics such as sex and drugs.
- However uncomfortable and embarrassing the conversation may be, discussing the sensitive topic shows responsibility, it can strengthen your relationship with your parent(s), and it will increase your knowledge.
- When you are ready to begin, have specific questions in mind, start in a comfortable situation, be calm and respectful, and even use something you see on TV as a starting point.
- Remember it’s important to talk to someone, and talking once is NOT enough.
### Goal 8: Let’s Talk About …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County ___________________</th>
<th>Name of Facilitator ______________________</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School ____________________</td>
<td>Grade in school _______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle one: male female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>Native American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Other ____________________________________</td>
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Please circle the number that indicates how much you enjoyed the activities.

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I enjoyed the Teen Role Model activity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I enjoyed the Role-play activity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I enjoyed the Fishbowl activity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I enjoyed the Duplo Block activity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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Please circle the number that indicates what you knew before and after participating in this session.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Before the Session</th>
<th>After the Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the importance of talking with my parents, even though sometimes it can be hard.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand why some topics are more difficult to discuss with my parents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand how to start a conversation with my parents regarding a sensitive topic.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand the importance of talking about the topic more than once.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand the consequences of not talking with my parents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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