

Social and Emotional Issues for Teens

Resource Packet

Essential skills you already use in working with teens:

- Active listening - acknowledging what you are hearing, asking further questions
- Coaching - preparing for and practicing ahead of time, giving instructions
- Education - teaching explicit knowledge or skills to assist with *any* area of life
- Empathy - coming from a place of concern and understanding
- Engaging - capturing interest and motivating
- Positive Reinforcement - repetitive positive, specific feedback

Can you identify any others?

Maximizing work with teens:

1. Teach as many “life skills” as possible.
2. Facilitate the identification and development of strengths.
3. Understand and respect cultural differences. Know the social, media influences on youth.
4. Be authentic in giving lots of praise. Build confidence and self-esteem.
5. Model open communication and conflict resolution.
6. When you get a gut feeling that you need more help on a situation, go with your gut.
7. Be strong, direct and instructive. Be consistent and follow-through.
8. Value the family and community of every young person.

Q & A

1) *Question:*

Would it be possible to cover something about dealing with **anger management**? I've had students that would get so upset they would inappropriately act out and as a supervisor it was hard to calm them down. I would like to learn ways, as educators, we can intercept that anger before it become explosive, disruptive and more importantly unsafe.

Response:

Young people should learn anger management from anyone at all who is willing to teach them. We all need help learning to manage anger. Young people are expected to manage anger under extreme circumstances, yet they are rarely taught strategies and skills for doing so. Let's review our own anger management skills right now, and which we can teach and how...

- "I see you are getting really angry. Please calm down so we can talk about this."
 - "Ok, this is getting stressful, let's all take a break."
 - "Breathe...breathe...breathe..."
 - "You're getting really angry, count to 50 and give yourself a chance to calm down".
 - "Walk away right now".
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2) *Question(s):*

Suspecting a Problem: How far is it appropriate to probe if you suspect a problem? How do you approach the discussion if they haven't mentioned anything? What to do if the student won't talk about it, but you continue to suspect it's a problem, and/or possibly getting worse? What if the student wants it to remain private and no one else to know?

Mentor's Role: What do you tell mentors ahead of time (program policy) if the student says something to them in confidence, but they hasn't shared it with you? What if the student requests anonymity? Should they bring up an issue if they have a good relationship with the student?

Abuse: What do you do if you suspect or the student has said something around sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse—at home or elsewhere in the student's life?

Response:

- What are the boundaries of confidentiality for the program? Know them, articulate them verbally and in writing. Utilize them. Let young people know when you are concerned. Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Provide an opening for discussion and respect where it leads. Only probe to the degree you are prepared to know/help.
- If a young person shows direct signs of abuse (marks, bruises or verbally states abuse) you may be responsible for reporting it.

"If you or someone else is in danger, I can't keep it a secret."

3) Question:

Homelessness: What issues are likely to come up? How can we help? What's appropriate?

Response outline:

- Review of types of homelessness - street homelessness, shelter, living with friends/family
 - Problems with sleep, clothing, transportation
 - Lessons learned from young people and parents on this topic - fear, anxiety, vulnerability
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4). Question:

Involving Parents: When, and if it's appropriate to involve parents about a problem/issue, including when you only suspect an issue? What and how much to share or not; and the delicacy of handling the situation.

Response:

The more a parent can be involved the better...unless it's going to destroy rapport with the young person. It is likely not in your role to *have* to involve a parent unless there is a specific safety concern. Always encourage parent involvement. Report to parents on positives as often as possible. Discuss with the teen ahead of time what concerns you may want to discuss...get "permission" to involve parents around general issues.

"I'd really love to share your accomplishments with someone else in your life...who can I call?"

"Listen, this is serious, your mom should know about this...we need to involve her."

5). Question:

Navigating Help: Whom do you involve and when? Do you work individually or in tandem with the students' teachers, councilors, principals as well as parents?

Response:

Working in tandem can strengthen interventions. When possible, ask the teen who to involve and how. Encourage involvement of other caring adults. When physical safety is at stake, you **must** involve someone.

"You're telling me you're getting hurt, I have to tell someone. There's no negotiating on that."

6). Question:

Sexual Identity: How do you work with teens struggling with their sexual identity, including homosexuality, transgender and the like?

Response:

There is no one right way. Every teens needs are different. Always convey acceptance and respect for all people. When sexual identity comes up as a topic, be open and set limits on discriminatory statements or behavior. At the same time, understand there are enormous cultural

differences and do not take personal offense to adolescent statements about sexuality. With this approach, teens will give you enough messages if they want to discuss something more about their sexuality.

“I respect all people.”

“To me, there is nothing at all wrong or bad about someone who is not straight”.

“It’s okay to be gay”.

“Listen, you can’t discriminate against others here.”

7). Question:

Crisis Management: What do you do if something happens that’s extremely upsetting to the group (such as a 9/11 incident or school shooting incident, a death of one of the interns)?

Response:

Be a leader. Name the crisis and organize a response. Know that all reactions are normal. If others are leading, follow their leadership and facilitate their instructions. Allow expression of emotion. Express your own emotions as needed and as appropriate. Utilize all resources available.

Know when to call 911. Be trained in First Aid and CPR. Take a training on Psychological First Aid.

Top Resources

family members, school counselors, teachers, mentors, peers, community, internet

NYC Teens

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/teen/html/home/home.shtml>

Health and Mental Health Resources:

- 1-800-LIFENET is a free, confidential help line for New York City residents. You can call 24 hours per day/7 days per week. The hotline's staff of trained mental health professionals help callers find mental health and substance abuse services.
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Kidshealth.org = Best website for Health/Mental health education
Videos and articles for kids, teens, parents, educators in English and Spanish
- 311 - any city service or program for any need you can think of (homelessness, domestic violence, child protection, food, medical, etc.)

Child Abuse Resource:

Child protection = Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

“Every child deserves to be safe. If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call the State Central Register at **800-342-3720** or call **311** and ask to be connected to the hotline.”

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/home/home.shtml>

LGBT Resources:

- “The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.”
www.thetrevorproject.org
- GLBT National Youth Talkline at 1-800-246-PRIDE (1-800-246-7743).
- The Center - Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center
208 West 13th Street New York, NY 10011 212-620-7310 www.gaycenter.org

Anger is a healthy, normal emotion, but it becomes a problem when it's expressed in an unhealthy way that hurts yourself or others. Find out how to manage anger. If you need help, call 1-800-LifeNet and talk to someone. All calls are strictly confidential.

Why do People Get Angry?

Anger is a normal and healthy response to any of these situations:

- You've been treated unfairly
- You feel you have no control over things
- You're stressed or under a lot of pressure
- You're going through physical changes which cause major mood swings
- You're depressed
- You just have a personality with a short fuse

Anger is experienced by everyone at some point, but it can be a difficult emotion to manage, particularly because we're often taught not to show or express it. It's not uncommon to feel guilty or ashamed about being angry despite it being a necessary emotion. It only becomes unhealthy when you express it in a way that hurts yourself or others.

If you bottle up anger, you may find that it can come out in ways that you don't expect. **Becoming violent is never an option.**



Managing Your Anger

Count to 100: When people are angry they can say or do things that they regret later. If you feel that you're becoming angry, do something to cool down, like count to 100, and then continue the discussion later.

Leave the Room: If the situation is getting to the stage where people are yelling or are possibly being violent, leave the room and tell them you will talk about it when they and/or you are calm.

Do Something Active: Do something physical like kicking a soccer ball, punching a pillow, or going for a run. This will give you a chance to release some of the energy and calm down a bit.

Play Video Games: If you feel like you're going to get into a fight, it's better to do it while playing a video game rather than in real life. It's a good way to release some anger and negative energy.

Listen to Music: Put on your headphones and play your favorite music for a while. Music affects mood and you might calm down just by listening to it.

Sit in a Quiet Place: Go to a park or wherever you feel calm and just relax. Try and think about why you're angry along with some solutions to the problem you're having.

What Can I do if I Keep Getting Angry?

Talk to someone about it. Speaking to someone may help you identify why you're getting angry. A teacher, school counselor, or trusted friend or family member all have a stake in helping you control how you manage your anger. Plus, someone outside the situation can help you deal with what's at the root of your anger so that you don't need to resort to lashing out. Becoming violent is never an option; you could make things worse or harm yourself or someone else.

Getting More Help....

If you feel you don't have anyone to talk to about your anger or if you need more resources, call LifeNet. LifeNet can help you sort through your problems and point you to someone in your area who can help you.

To learn more about issues facing NYC teens and how to deal with them visit www.nyc.gov/teen

Source:

Reach Out! (www.reachout.com.au) is a web-based service that provides information, support, and interactive features to help young people get through tough times.