



# THE HEART OF PARENT-TEEN

Module One: FOUNDATIONS

Session One: Reflections on the Family

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gratefully  
acknowledge the  
financial  
assistance of the  
BAPTIST  
SAVINGS AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
SOCIETY  
in making the  
production of this  
parenting series  
possible.

## Introducing: Forums for the Family

### Putting the Heart Back Into Parent - Teen Relationships

One need not look far today to see that the family is in trouble. No longer are families necessarily places of unconditional love and stable support. A changing society is putting enormous pressure on families and the effects are most apparent when a child reaches the teen years.

This series of forums is designed to help families get the most out of the teen years. Through practical insights and group discussion, a parent is assisted in their search to find answers to the issues facing their family. They are equipped with ideas and resources to either heal a damaged relationship with their teenager, or to enhance an already good relationship.

The hope is that through the insights gained, the teen years will be the enjoyable and fulfilling time they are meant to be for teenagers and parents alike.

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# An Overview of the Series

**The Heart of Parent-Teen** is designed as a twelve session programme divided into four modules. Sessions are timed to last 90 minutes. Each session builds upon previous ones and so it is important that participants aim to attend each session.

<b>MODULE ONE:</b>	<b>FOUNDATIONS</b>
Session One:	Reflections on the Family
Session Two:	Portrait of a Healthy Family
Session Three:	What Teenagers Really Need
<b>MODULE TWO:</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEENAGER</b>
Session Four:	Adolescent Development
Session Five:	Adolescent Behaviour
Session Six:	Adolescent Culture
<b>MODULE THREE:</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>
Session Seven:	Learning to Listen
Session Eight:	Communicating Unconditional Love
Session Nine:	Barriers to Communication
<b>MODULE FOUR:</b>	<b>DISCIPLINE</b>
Session Ten:	Principles of Discipline
Session Eleven:	Issues Related to Discipline
Session Twelve:	Dealing With Conflict

***You cannot effectively discipline your teenager if you do not have good lines of communication, and you cannot have good communication unless you first understand your teenager.***



## AT A GLANCE:

**Much of the benefit of these forums comes from the relationship that is built with other participants.**

# Getting Started

Much of the benefit of these forums comes from the relationship that is built with other participants. The better you get to know each other, the easier it will be to talk about your family.

## 1. Introductions

Introduce yourself to the group by telling them:

- Your name
- The names and ages of your children
- The nature of your family or parenting role (e.g. solo mother, blended family, step parent etc.)

## 2. Discussion

Discuss your answers to the following questions, either with the whole group or in smaller groups

- Why are you here?
- How does your teenager(s) feel about you being here?
- What words would you use to describe your own experiences as a teenager in the family you grew up in?

### A word of explanation...

The purpose of these sessions is not to gossip about our teenager. It is not to tell others how good they are or how bad they are! Nor is the direct purpose to change your teenager and make them a better person.

The purpose of these sessions is to change **you** and to help you be a better parent!

While inevitably we will talk about our teen's attitudes and behaviour, we do so in order to discover how we can best respond to them in a way that will help them to grow.

Teenagers who are reluctant to have us attend these sessions need to be reassured of this, and should feel free to read through the notes you bring home. (Why not leave them lying around!)

*The purpose of these sessions is to change you and to help you be a better parent!*



# Aims of these Forums

These forums aim to do three things:

1. **Provide insights**  
Throughout these notes are many helpful ideas, insights and suggestions. These notes are not however the definitive word on parenting teenagers. Opportunities will be given as we work through the notes to comment on what is written: to illustrate with your own experiences, to add to what is said, or to disagree.
2. **Provide a practical forum**  
There are many helpful books on parenting for the parent to read, along with valuable seminars to attend. This series aims to do what these cannot: provide a forum where a parent can discuss issues related to their own parenting with other parents who are facing or have faced similar issues. Through this you will not only receive helpful ideas and suggestions but will receive understanding and support.
3. **Provide a resource for developing parent-teen communication**  
The ultimate aim of these forums is to develop deeper communication between you and your teenager. As well as many helpful insights and suggestions on improving communication, each session features a section called "Parent-Teen Heart to Heart".

*Your group facilitator is not there as an expert or a teacher. Their role is to guide you through the material and assist the process of discussion and the sharing of ideas and opinions.*

## AT A GLANCE:

The aims of this series are:

1. To provide helpful insights into the parenting of teenagers.
2. To provide a forum for discussing specific issues and sharing ideas and practical suggestions.
3. To provide a resource for developing heart to heart communication between parents and their teenagers.



**Parent Teen Heart to Heart:**

*This section is found at the end of each set of notes and gives a topic (or topics) for parents and teenagers to discuss as "homework" during the week. Each session will begin with a chance to "report back".*

Maximum benefit will be gained from these forums if you commit yourself to applying what you learn. As well as the discussing the topic for the week with your teenager, you are encouraged to re-read the notes, fill in the blanks in the **Revision** section, and think about the sections headed "For Reflection".

**For Reflection:**

*These sections are found throughout the notes. They give you something to think about during the week related to your role as a parent.*



*"Parenthood is not an object of appetite or even desire. It is an object of will."*  
- R. G. Collingwood, British philosopher



# Principles

In meeting together for these sessions, there are certain principles the group must keep in mind. They are as follows:

1. **No one is an expert**  
Even your group facilitator does not claim to know all the answers. Therefore the onus is on each participant to listen to others and sift through what is discussed. Anyone is free to disagree with what is taught.
2. **All teenagers are different**  
Any person with more than one child knows that this true! What was an effective strategy in your family may not be so effective in the family of the person sitting next to you, because their teenager is different from yours.
3. **No one understands your situation better than you**  
No one has the right to tell you what you should do, because they cannot fully understand the personal and family dynamics present in your home.
4. **Everyone has made mistakes**  
No matter how “successful” we may appear, all of us have made mistakes in our parenting.
5. **No one deserves to be labelled “a failure”**  
Teenagers have the ability and the right to make choices. Wrong choices on their part are not necessarily our fault as a parent.
6. **All of us can learn**  
Because none of us are experts, all of us have things we can learn from these sessions. The first step in learning is having the humility to acknowledge that we do not have all the answers.
7. **We are not here to compare or compete**  
At times it will be hard not to compare. We may face the temptation of feeling that we are a better parent than we really are, or perhaps a worse parent than is warranted. Make it your aim to learn from other parent’s insights.

*While quick to affirm the importance of parenting many parents are slow to study and train to do it well.*

## AT A GLANCE:

These forums are not designed to tell you what you should do.

They are intended as an opportunity for you to reflect on your parenting and to search for new insights and ideas to improve the quality of your family life.

If you enter into these sessions with a desire to learn and a willingness to share, then you will derive the greatest benefit from them.

*“No matter how calmly you try to referee, parenting will eventually produce bizarre behaviour, and I’m not talking about the kids.” - Bill Cosby, U.S. comedian, actor*



# Foundations of the Family

## AT A GLANCE:

A healthy home environment is a big factor in producing healthy, well adjusted teenagers.

The key relationship in determining the health of a family is that between the parents.

Parents must devote time to nurture the health of their own relationship if they want a healthy family.

### **Brainstorm:**

*What is the purpose of the family? What benefits does it offer that see it universally practiced by cultures throughout human history?*



### **The Purpose of the Family**

The family provides the best environment for the personal development of its members:

- (i) Ideally it is an environment of unconditional love where family members are free to learn and fail.
- (ii) The personal values and morals of a parent can be taught in the context of life through role modelling.
- (iii) Character is developed through the necessity of having to live with a group of diverse people.

### **For Those Who are Married: The Importance of the Marriage Relationship**

A family does not necessarily begin once a child arrives. It begins when a couple commits themselves to marriage.

In a two-parent family, this marriage relationship becomes the foundational relationship. It takes priority over all other relationships, because if the marriage is weak, teenagers will be feeling insecure at the very time where they need stability and strength at home. These feelings commonly manifest themselves in resentment and rebellion towards their parents.

Parents must work at their relationship and must also ensure that their love and commitment to one another is clearly evident to their teenagers.

*Because of the importance of the marriage relationship, parents need to take deliberate steps to nurture and maintain their marriage.*

### **Discussion:**

*How do you protect important personal relationships (i.e. marriage for those of you who are married) from the demands of parenting teenagers?*



### **For Reflection:**

*For those who are married, what evidence does your teenager have that you and your spouse really love each other?*





# The Dynamics of Raising Children

## AT A GLANCE

While parents have the primary responsibility for child rearing, part of that responsibility is to look for ways to expose their teenager to positive role models that will influence them for good.

This influence does not come primarily through what this person says, but who they are.

### The Responsibility of Raising Children

#### 1. The Parent

A parent must accept the primary responsibility for raising their child. They have the greatest opportunity to influence their child for good.

#### 2. The Wider Family

Our emphasis on the nuclear family and the tendency for people to live a transient lifestyle, mean that our children often miss out on the contribution the wider family can make to raising children. Grandparents, aunts and uncles can offer invaluable support to parents, particularly during the sometimes turbulent teen years.

#### 3. The Community

It is good for teenagers, who are going through the process of seeking independence from their parents, to have someone outside of the family reinforcing their parents' values and morals.

#### Discussion:

Who are the significant adults in a position to influence your teenager? What role do they play? What effect do they have?



### The Process of Raising Children

#### 1. Information

The responsibility of raising children means that we pass on information necessary for living a mature life. We teach them to share, to forgive and to love. But more important than information is...

#### 2. Formation

Formation occurs in our teenagers when they see us living by the same values we are trying to teach them. We teach them best when we illustrate our lessons by the way we live.

***“Do as I say, not as I do!” simply does not cut it with teenagers. They are quick to identify hypocrisy and scathing in their condemnation of it.***

#### For Reflection:

To what extent do I model the life I am trying to instill in my teenager? Are there qualities I am trying to teach that are not evident in me?



*“Fathers and mothers have lost the idea that the highest aspiration they might have for their children is for them to be wise.” - Allan Bloom, U.S. educator,*



## For Further Thought and Application...



**Parent Teen Heart to Heart:**

*How willing are you to receive feedback from your teenager? It is not their role to "raise" us and uninvited criticism can be disrespectful. However, why not try asking them. "Are there any areas in my life or in my relationships that you feel I need to work on?"*

Note: When asking your teenager questions like these, it is important not to argue, but to listen and to indicate that you will think about what they are saying. Remember, that their perception is just that: their perception. You don't have to agree with them and they are not necessarily right, but it is important to bear in mind that this is the conclusion they have come to. Think carefully about what they have said, and begin to work on improved attitudes and actions. If you do not believe they are right, ask yourself what has given them this impression. What can you do to create a more accurate impression?

### Revision

1. In a two-parent family the \_\_\_\_\_ relationship is the primary relationship.
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ has the primary responsibility for raising children.
3. The process of formation takes place in our teenagers when they see the way we \_\_\_\_\_.