Parent-Child Connectedness: New Interventions for Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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About ETR
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ETR’s Program Services Division offers comprehensive services for the development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of critical public health initiatives. The division works directly with community-based programs, state and local education agencies, health care providers, health educators and public health organizations.

ETR’s Publishing Division produces authoritative health education and health promotion resources that empower young people and adults to lead healthier lives. Thousands of ETR pamphlets, books and other materials are used in hundreds of health care settings, schools and workplaces across the United States and around the world.

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Introduction to Parent-Child Connectedness Intervention Activities

Background and Purpose

These intervention activities represent the culmination of three and a half years of work by the Parent-Child Connectedness: Bridging Research and Intervention Design (PCC BRIDGE) project team. The activities were conceptualized by PCC BRIDGE project co-directors Lori Rolleri and Steve Bean at Education, Training, Research Associates (ETR) in collaboration with our curriculum consultant Pamela Wilson, MSW, who wrote the initial drafts of all the activities except the active listening activity.

The purpose behind designing these activities is to provide community-based organizations (CBOs) with intervention resources they can use to start impacting parent-child connectedness (PCC) with the parents and teens with whom they work. These activities were designed primarily for use by practitioners in the area of adolescent reproductive health (ARH), but they are general enough to be used for a variety of prevention topics and by a variety of prevention practitioners across many different intervention settings.

Parent-child connectedness can be defined as a positive, high quality emotional bond between parent and child that is felt by both parent and child (mutual) and is long lasting (sustained over time). Why should ARH—and other practitioners—incorporate PCC into their prevention work? Research has shown that PCC is protective against a wide variety of negative life outcomes for adolescents, including unintended pregnancy, sexual risk-taking, delinquency and truancy, violent and aggressive behavior, poor academic performance and others. For more information about what is currently understood by researchers about PCC, read ETR’s review of PCC literature, titled Parent-Child Connectedness: Implications for Research, Interventions and Positive Impacts on Adolescent Health. This monograph can be downloaded for free from ETR’s Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP) website at http://www.etr.org/recapp/research/litreview.pdf.

What research has not, to date, learned enough about is exactly what PCC looks like in families, how it is established and maintained, and exactly how practitioners can effectively assist families in establishing and maintaining a positive level of connectedness. With funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the PCC BRIDGE project has spent the past three and a half years investigating this question. After reviewing the available research literature, we convened a panel of experts to help us
analyze our synthesis of the literature. This work led to our proposed model for how PCC is established and maintained in families.

Subsequently, we conducted a focus group study with economically challenged African-American and Latino parents and teens. We wanted to check the current body of research, which had been conducted primarily with European-American families, as well as our own emerging theories about PCC, with the experience of families of color. We also sought to give families of color voice and presence in our exploration of PCC. Our report on this focus group study, titled Parent-Child Connectedness: Voices of African-American and Latino Parents and Teens, can be found at http://www.etr.org/recapp/research/PCCFocusGroupReport.pdf.

From the work described above, PCC BRIDGE project staff have identified what we believe are the seven key parent behaviors necessary to establish and maintain PCC within families. These behaviors were written into our PCC Parent Behavior-Determinant-Intervention Logic Model (PCC BDI). This model not only lists these key behaviors, but also attempts to comprehensively identify the determinants of these behaviors, or the factors that increase or decrease parents’ ability to exhibit these behaviors. A pdf version of the logic model is available for free at http://www.etr.org/recapp/research/PCCBDILogicModel.pdf.

The design of all of the intervention activities in this booklet has been guided by our PCC BDI Logic Model. As a result, although these activities have not been evaluated for their effectiveness in increasing PCC, there is a sound theoretical basis for why they are likely to be effective. This likelihood is based on the logical, cause-and-effect relationship between the design of the intervention activities, the determinants at which these activities are targeted, and the PCC-related behaviors affected by these determinants.

Using the Activities

Some of the topics and specific activities you will see here will be familiar to you. For example, one activity teaches parents and teens the skill of active listening. This is a common skill taught to youth in schools and to parents in communication classes. In fact the design for teaching that skill presented here is taken from ETR’s abstinence-based, out-of-school teen pregnancy prevention program for 11-14 year olds, titled Wait for Sex. What is unique about these intervention activities, even those that teach about topics and skills that may be familiar, is that they emphasize and are aimed at increasing or maintaining a positive level of parent-child connectedness. Despite the fact that research shows how significant the positive impact of PCC is, very few interventions currently exist with the explicit goal of maintaining it or increasing it in families.
These intervention activities have been designed for maximum flexibility. They fit into a wide variety of settings, e.g. traditional community-based workshops, parent support groups at a faith-based setting or lunchtime workplace parent meetings. Two of the activities are designed to be self-guided, meaning that parents and teens can complete them without the help of a trained facilitator. The activities have also been kept short (typically 45 minutes) out of respect for the fact that parents’ time is often stretched thin.

Another aspect of the flexibility designed into this set of activities is that each activity stands on its own. This is important for two reasons: one, because parents may not have the time available for the eight 45-minute, or four 90-minute sessions that would be necessary to cover all this material; and two, because it is likely that parents will miss some of the sessions. Because none of the sessions is a prerequisite for any of the other sessions, parents who miss a session will not be lost when they return for another one.

Making the activities “stand-alone” also allows practitioners to customize the intervention to the needs of parents. For example, if the parents with whom you work are already great listeners, you can leave out this activity and focus on topics and skills that they need more. Parents, who are generally strapped for time, will appreciate not having to sit through sessions about things they already know. In order to make the sessions stand alone, some of the same material is presented in different sessions.

If you would like to run the activities as a series, we recommend using the following order (this assumes 45-minute sessions):

Session 1: Parenting Style and Parent-Child Connectedness (first half)
Session 2: Parenting Style and Parent-Child Connectedness (second half)
Session 3: Understanding Adolescent Development
Session 4: Responding to Your Adolescent
Session 5: Connectedness and the “Emotional Bank Account” (self-guided)
Session 6: Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Connectedness (self-guided)
Session 7: Active Listening to Provide Emotional Support (first half)
Session 8: Active Listening to Provide Emotional Support (second half)

You may also wish to add an introductory session and/or concluding session to help create a supportive environment, to celebrate parents’ achievements and to administer any evaluation instruments you want to use to measure the impact of the program. Finally, we heartily encourage you to adapt these activities to your own setting(s) and needs.
The intervention activities presented here are by no means a comprehensive PCC intervention. They target some of the behaviors and determinants that are identified in our logic model and that we believe are critical to PCC based on our best “educated guess.” We also designed these activities to impact determinants that we thought would be less likely to be impacted, intentionally or inadvertently, by other prevention interventions that practitioners might be using.

These activities comprise the beginning of a compendium of PCC activities that we hope will grow in the future to eventually become a comprehensive and customizable program to help families establish and maintain PCC.

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Parenting Style and Parent-Child Connectedness
Parenting Style and Parent-Child Connectedness

**Time Required:** One 90-minute session, or if necessary, two 45-minute sessions.

**Setting and Audience**
This activity is designed to be led by an experienced facilitator in a variety of settings such as:

- A lunch-time workshop series in a work setting
- Workshops at community-based organizations
- Workshops sponsored by schools
- Workshops sponsored by communities of faith
- Support groups (formal and informal)
- Weekend retreats

The audience for the activity is parents of adolescents ages 11-19.

**Workshop Description**
The workshop consists of the following activities:

- Through guided imagery, parents think back on their early teen years and their relationships with their parents during that time.
- Parents pair off and discuss any memories they choose to share.
- In the large group, parents discuss the overall closeness of their childhood relationship with their own parents and the ways that relationship has affected their parenting style.
- Parents get a handout with a definition of parent-child connectedness (PCC).
- Parents rate the levels of PCC, on a scale from 1-10, in their childhood relationships with their own parents and in their current relationships with their teens.
- Parents set a goal for increasing the level of PCC with their teens.

**Workshop Objectives**
By the end of this session, parents will be able to:

- Define Parent Child Connectedness (PCC);
- Describe how their parenting style has been influenced by their experiences as a child and their parents’ modeling;
- Think about and describe the ways they want their relationships with their children to be different from their childhood relationships with their own parents;
- Rate the level of PCC with their teen on a scale from 1-10; and
- State an intention to maintain or increase the level of PCC with their teen.
Materials Checklist

- Flip chart and easel
- Colored markers
- Facilitator Resource, “Reflecting on Your Childhood” (5th to 6th grade reading level)
- Handout, “What is Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC)?” (8th grade reading level)
- Handout, “Rate the Level of Parent-Child Connectedness” (7th grade reading level)

Set-up & Preparation

1. If you do not have 90 minutes for a single session, you can conduct this activity as two 45-minute sessions. Plan to end the first session after step 3, “Large Group Discussion of Guided Imagery.” You will need to adjust the timing allotted to each of the activities.

2. Begin the second session (if you have split this activity into two sessions) with another warm-up activity of your choice. (Since it may still be early in your workshop series, another warm-up activity will help parents get to know each other and become more comfortable in the group.) Then ask the parents who were present last time to review what happened and summarize the group’s discussion. Fill in anything important they miss from your notes or memory. Then go straight into step 4, “Introducing PCC,” where you introduce PCC and review the handout.

3. Make sure you understand parent-child connectedness well. While a brief treatment of the topic is offered in the “What is Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC)?” handout that accompanies this activity, it is important that facilitators of this activity understand PCC at a deeper level than is covered by the handout. Free copies of two important documents can be downloaded from our Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP) website at http://www.etr.org/recapp/research/litreview.pdf. These documents are ETR’s review of the literature on parent-child connectedness and the report on our focus group study on PCC which was conducted with African-American and Latino parents and teens.

4. Choose a brief warm-up activity (an activity that the entire group can do in five minutes) to conduct at the beginning of this session. This will help create a comfortable learning environment for the sensitive activities participants will be doing during the workshop.

5. Be sure to establish ground rules to create a safe environment.

6. Review the facilitator resource, “Reflecting on Your Childhood” carefully. Practice reading it aloud in a comfortable tone of voice, pausing long enough for people to form at least one image before moving on. (This usually requires about five seconds of silence.)
Parenting Style and Parent-Child Connectedness

1. **Introductions (15 minutes)**
   a) Tell parents that during this activity they will:
      - learn about something called parent-child connectedness (PCC);
      - reflect back on their childhoods to assess the level of PCC they had with their parents;
      - assess the level of PCC they have with their own teens;
      - decide if they’re happy with this level and what they want to do about it, if anything.

   b) Ask parents to introduce themselves. Conduct the brief warm-up activity you have chosen.

   c) Outline the following ground rules to help create a safe and comfortable environment for today’s discussion:
      - Listen with an open mind.
      - Respect different points of view.
      - Take care of yourself – trust your gut.
      - Share the time with each other – don’t dominate the discussion.
      - Ask any questions – there is no such thing as a stupid question.
      - Recognize that it’s normal to feel a range of feelings – joy, sadness, anger, guilt, etc. – when discussing your childhood and your own children.
      - Recognize that all parents want the best for their children and are doing the best they can with what they currently know and understand. All parents have both strengths and challenges.

2. **Guided Imagery and Dyad Activity (25 minutes)**
   a) Give the following information:
      - I will read some questions that are intended to bring back memories about your own teen years. This is called “guided imagery.”
• Some people have happy memories and others have sad or painful memories about their early years in their families. If you have painful memories that you do not want to think about, feel free to let your mind move to another topic. Take care of yourself.

• After the guided imagery, you will pair off with someone and discuss any memories that you feel comfortable sharing. You will be in control of what/how much you share about your memories.

• Please close your eyes and relax. Listen and follow along with my questions, but remember this is your journey. I will be moving somewhat quickly, so if a memory comes up and you want stay with it, that's fine. Just go with the process in a way that feels comfortable to you.

b) Read the guided imagery questions from the facilitator resource slowly and with feeling, pausing as indicated. After the reading, ask participants to pair off to discuss any memories that they are comfortable sharing. Let them know that they have 15 minutes and that they don’t need to take any notes.

3. Large Group Discussion of Guided Imagery (15 minutes)
   a) After 15 minutes, reconvene the large group and ask these questions:
      • In a sentence or two, how would you describe your parents’ style of childrearing?
      • How close were you with your mother? How close were you with your father?
      • How close did your parents think they were with you?
      • How much conflict or fighting was there?
      • How has the way you were raised affected the way you are raising your children today?
      • What have you tried to do differently from the way your parents raised you?
      • How do you want your children’s lives to be different than your own?

4. Introducing PCC (10 minutes)
   a) Ask if anyone has ever heard of parent-child connectedness. (It will probably be a new term for most people.) Distribute the “What is Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC)?” handout and ask a volunteer to read it aloud.

b) Then ask:
   • Can someone explain PCC using your own words?
   • What do you think about PCC?
   • What’s your reaction to the benefits that PCC can give to children/teens?
5. Assessing PCC and Setting Goals (20 minutes)
   a) Tell parents that you want them to think about PCC in relation to their past and present. Distribute the handout, “Rate the Level of Parent-Child Connectedness.” Display the PCC scale that you made earlier and review it briefly.

   b) Give parents a moment to reflect and write down their responses on the handout.

   c) Ask parents to take turns responding verbally in the large group:
      - On this scale, how would you rate the level of connectedness between you and your parent(s) during your early teen years? Please explain your rating.
      - How would you rate the level of PCC in your relationship with your teen? Please explain your rating.
      - How do you think your teen would rate the relationship?
      - How happy are you with these ratings? What is one thing you will commit to do to raise the level of PCC by just one point? (Note: Encourage parents to be specific.)

6. Conclusion (3 minutes)
   a) Tell parents that it is time to bring the session to a close. To wrap things up, choose one of the questions below to ask and take a few responses from parents.
      - What is the most important thing you got from this session?
      - What will you tell other parents or friends about parent-child connectedness?
      - What’s one thing you want to work on in your relationship with your teenager? (Note: Have the parents share what they wrote in the Assessing PCC exercise. They will keep the “Rate the Level of Parent-Child Connectedness” handout to refer to over time.)
      - How helpful was it to talk with other parents about these issues?
      - What other issues would you like to deal with in a workshop like this?
Reflections on Your Childhood

Ask participants to relax and close their eyes if they’re comfortable doing this. Read the following *slowly and with feeling and pause between each section.*

1. Think back – to what you can remember – of the time when you were a young teenager, somewhere around age 12 or 13. Try to picture the way you looked then and where you were living at the time. Picture your parents, guardians, or whoever raised you. **PAUSE 5 seconds.**

2. How would you describe your parents’ style – their ways of raising you? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

3. How did you and your parents get along? How did they talk to you? How did you talk to them? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

4. What kinds of activities did you do with your parents? Did you do a lot of things together or just a few? Did you have much one-on-one time together? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

5. What kinds of things did you really enjoy doing with them? What did you want to do more of? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

6. How much affection did your parents show you? How much did you show them? Would you say you and your parents were close? Why or why not? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

7. Did your closeness with your parents change over time? If so, how did it change? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

8. Was there any difference between your relationship with your mother and your relationship with your father? What were the differences and how did you feel about them? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

9. How much did you agree with, or buy into, the values and beliefs that your parents tried to teach you? How much conflict, arguing or fighting took place between you and your parents? **PAUSE 5 seconds**

10. In general, how satisfied were you with the relationship between you and your mother, your father, and/or any other adult who raised you? How satisfied do you think they were with the relationship?
What is Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC)?

**Definition of PCC**

A positive, high quality emotional bond between parent and child that is felt by both parent and child (mutual) and is long lasting (sustained over time).

**What does PCC look like?**

- Parents and children spend enjoyable time together
- They communicate freely and openly
- They are affectionate and warm with each other
- They trust each other
- They respect and support one another
- They share similar values and respect their differences
- They support each other and make an effort to meet each other’s needs
- They feel optimistic about the family relationship
- Family conflict is at a low level
- Both parents and children are satisfied with the relationship

**Benefits of PCC**

- Research shows that PCC can be a "super-protector" for children/teens.
- PCC can form a protective barrier between children and the many challenges and risks they face in today's world.
- PCC can help prevent a variety of health and social problems such as drug use, violence, and teenage pregnancy.
Rate the Level of Parent-Child Connectedness

<table>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Total Connectedness</th>
</tr>
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</table>

- Rate the level of parent-child connectedness in your relationship with your own parent(s) or guardians: ____

- Rate the level of parent-child connectedness in your relationship with your teen(s): ____

- What is one thing you can do to increase the level of PCC in your relationship with your child?
  
  _______________________________________________________
  
  _______________________________________________________
  
  _______________________________________________________
Understanding Adolescent Development
Time Required: 45 minutes

Setting and Audience
This activity is designed to be led by an experienced facilitator in any one of a variety of settings, including:
- A lunch-time workshop series in a work setting
- Workshops at community-based organizations
- Workshops sponsored by schools
- Workshops sponsored by communities of faith
- Support groups (formal and informal)
- Weekend retreats

The audience for the activity is parents of adolescents ages 11-19.

Workshop Description
In this workshop:
- Parents think back to when they were 15 or 16 and then share an adjective that described them at that age.
- Parents respond to a series of questions exploring the ways they changed and developed from age 10 or 11 to age 15 or 16.
- Parents review key information on a handout titled, “Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior.”
- Finally, parents apply information from the handout to their relationships with their teens. They give examples of the ways their teens seek independence, report on how they typically respond, and brainstorm new and thoughtful ways of responding to those normal behaviors.

Workshop Objective
By the end of this session, parents will be able to:
- Recognize the aspects of teens’ desire for independence/autonomy that are a normal part of adolescent development.

Materials Checklist
- Flip chart and easel
- Colored markers
- Handout, “Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior” (7th to 8th grade reading level)
Set-up & Preparation

9. This workshop covers information on adolescent development. It is important that you, as a facilitator, have an in-depth, working knowledge of the topic. For a more in-depth discussion of adolescent development, visit: http://www.etr.org/recapp/column/column200309.htm.

10. Choose a warm-up activity that will help create a safe and comfortable learning environment for the activities in this workshop.

11. In advance, think of an adjective that describes what you were like as an adolescent. This will prepare you to model what parents do in activity 2, “What Kind of Adolescent Were You?”

Understanding Adolescent Development

1. Introduction (12 minutes)
   a) Introduce yourself and explain that today’s session will:
      - Explore the concept of “adolescent development.” This is a term used to describe the common abilities and behaviors that can be seen in most teenagers. They are a sign that teenagers are moving from childhood towards early adulthood.

   b) Ask parents to introduce themselves.

   c) Lead the brief warm-up activity you have chosen.

   d) Outline the following ground rules to help create a safe and comfortable environment for today’s discussion:
      - Listen with an open mind.
      - Respect different points of view.
      - Take care of yourself – trust your gut.
      - Share the time with each other – don’t dominate the discussion.
      - Ask any questions – there is no such thing as a stupid question.
      - Recognize that it’s normal to feel a range of feelings – joy, sadness, anger, guilt, etc. – when discussing your childhood and your own children.
      - Recognize that all parents want the best for their children and are doing the best they can with what they currently know and understand. All parents have both strengths and challenges.

2. What Kind of Adolescent Were You? (15 minutes)
   a) Ask parents to briefly remember what they were like as adolescents – around age 15 or 16. Ask each parent to think of an adjective that describes what they were like as a teen. Model the process by giving your own adjective. For
example, you might say that you were “shy,” “a late bloomer,” “athletic,” “a behavior problem,” or “fun-loving.” Then have parents share their adjectives.

b) When everyone has given an adjective, ask these questions:
   - When you were 15 or 16, in what ways (other than physically) had you changed from the person you had been at age 10 or 11?
   - What was different about your ability to think and analyze situations?
   - How were you different in your desire for independence?
   - How were you different in your ability to handle things on your own?

c) As you look back, what kinds of things were important for you to experience on your own, completely independent from your parents, to become a successful adult?

3. **Review of Adolescent Development (15 minutes)**
   a) Distribute the handout, “Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior.”

   b) Review (by either reading aloud or having parents read silently) the information under the headings, “Changes in Thinking and Reasoning” and “Social Changes.”

   c) Point out any examples of these developmental issues that you heard from parents when they were talking about their own adolescence in the “What Kind of Adolescent Were You?” activity.

   d) Use the following prompts to lead a brief discussion with parents:
      - Does this make sense to you? Why or why not?
      - Can you see any of these developmental issues in action with your own children? For example, how do you see your teens seeking independence? Give some examples. (Note: Make the point that teens’ style of seeking independence might be influenced by factors such as their personalities, their peer groups, and your family background and culture.)
      - How do you typically respond to your children? (Note: Record these responses on flipchart for future use.)

   e) Do you think you might respond differently if, **before reacting** to your teens, you were to stop and think about how your teen’s behavior might be a part of normal adolescent development? If so, how might your response be different?

4. **Conclusion (3 minutes)**
   a) Tell parents that the session is coming to a close. To wrap up the session, ask the following questions:
      - What ideas from this session do want to think more about?
      - What, if anything, do you want to try to do differently with your teenager?
Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior

Understanding Your Teen’s Behavior

Adolescence is the time in life when young people make the journey out of childhood toward adulthood. It can be a wild ride for both teens and parents! It’s all about change. These are changes that your child must try to understand and changes in your child that you must adjust to.

Adolescents are fun and stimulating, but they can also be confusing and frustrating. Understanding normal teen behavior can reduce the confusion, if not the frustration. Here are two key developmental issues for teens:

Changes in Thinking and Reasoning

Children tend to be concrete thinkers. As teenagers, they begin to be able to think abstractly. They have new mental tools that allow them to:

- Analyze situations logically in terms of cause and effect.
- Consider “what might happen if...?”
- Think about their futures, evaluate alternatives, and set personal goals.
- Make mature decisions more often.

As their abilities to think and reason increase, teens will:

- Become increasingly independent.
- Take on increased responsibilities, such as babysitting or summer jobs.
- Begin to consider future careers and occupations.
- Become concerned about social issues such as racism or homelessness.

Teenagers become very focused on themselves and their new abilities. It is normal for them to:

- Argue for the sake of arguing.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Be self-centered.
- Constantly find fault with the adult's point of view.
- Behave like "drama queens" and "drama kings”...at least some of the time.

Social Changes

All these changes allow teens to gain independence from their families:

- As teens mature, their peers become increasingly important.
- More and more, your teens want freedom to do things with their friends.
- Teens typically want more privacy and more time away from you.
Responding to Your Adolescent
Responding to Your Adolescent

Time Required:  One 45-minute session

Setting and Audience
This activity is designed to be led by an experienced facilitator in any one of a variety of settings, including:

- A lunch-time workshop series in a work setting
- Workshops at community-based organizations
- Workshops sponsored by schools
- Workshops sponsored by communities of faith
- Support groups (formal and informal)
- Weekend retreats

The audience for the activity is parents of adolescents ages 11-19.

Workshop Description
In this workshop:

- Parents hear a brief presentation on adolescent development and parent-child connectedness.
- Parents get into pairs to analyze a story about a parent and his/her teenager. They determine if the teen’s behavior is reasonable, the effectiveness of the parent’s response, and alternative ways of responding.

Workshop Objectives
By the end of this session, parents will be able to:

- Recognize that teenagers’ desire for independence is a normal part of adolescent development;
- Distinguish between adolescent behavior that is normal and reasonable and that which is unreasonable; and
- Find constructive ways to respond to teens’ behaviors that may feel frustrating to parents.
Materials Checklist
- Flip chart and easel
- Colored markers
- Handout, “Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior” (8th grade reading level)
- Handout, “What is Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC)?” (8th grade reading level)
- Handout, “Is This Reasonable Adolescent Behavior?” (6th grade reading level)
- Handout, “Tips for Responding to Teenagers” (7th to 8th grade reading level)

Set-up & Preparation
12. This workshop covers information on adolescent development and parent-child connectedness. It is important for you to have an in-depth, working knowledge of both topics. For a more in-depth discussion of adolescent development, visit: http://www.etr.org/recapp/column/column200309.htm. You can download a free copy of ETR’s literature review on parent-child connectedness at: http://www.etr.org/recapp/research/litreview.pdf.

13. Choose a warm-up activity to conduct at the beginning of this workshop. The warm-up activity should help create a safe and comfortable learning environment for the other activities in this workshop.

14. Read the scenarios in the handout, “Is This Reasonable Adolescent Behavior?” and identify points that you want to make with each of the situations. You might not need or want to use all the scenarios, so choose the ones that seem most relevant to your group.

Responding to Your Adolescent

1. Introduction (5 minutes)
a) Introduce yourself and give an overview of today’s workshop. Explain that today’s session will:
   - Help them understand the common abilities and behaviors that can be seen in most teenagers. These qualities are a sign that teenagers are moving from childhood towards early adulthood;
   - Give information about parent-child connectedness (PCC);
   - Explore the ways that parents’ responses to common teen behaviors can affect PCC; and
   - Find ways to respond to teen behaviors that will help maintain or enhance the parent-teen connection.
b) Ask parents to introduce themselves and conduct the brief warm-up activity you have chosen. Outline the following ground rules to help create a safe and comfortable environment for today’s discussion:

- Listen with an open mind.
- Respect different points of view.
- Take care of yourself – trust your gut.
- Share the time with each other – don’t dominate the discussion.
- Ask any questions – there is no such thing as a stupid question.
- Recognize that it’s normal to feel a range of feelings – joy, sadness, anger, guilt, etc. – when discussing your childhood and your own children.
- Recognize that all parents want the best for their children and are doing the best they can with what they currently know and understand. All parents have both strengths and challenges.

2. Adolescent Development and PCC (10 minutes)

a) Distribute the handouts “Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior” and “What is Parent-Child Connectedness?”

- If your group has completed the Understanding Adolescent Development activity, then this activity can be used as a review or it can be skipped, leaving more time for discussion during the other activities in this session.

b) Give parents a minute or two to review the “Understanding Your Adolescent’s Behavior” handout silently. (Note: If you suspect that any parents will have difficulty reading the material, read it aloud yourself or ask volunteers to read it aloud.)

c) Use the following questions to lead a brief discussion:

- What do you think about this information?
- Can you see any of these changes happening to your own children? For example, how do you see your teens seeking independence? Give some examples.

During this discussion, be sure to give a very brief definition of PCC and explain the protective outcomes (found in the “What is PCC?” handout) that come from having a close connection between parent and teen. Encourage parents to spend some time with the “What is PCC?” handout later.

d) End this segment by making the following points:

- The way parents respond to their children’s changing behavior during adolescence can impact parent-child connectedness negatively or positively.
- The next activity is going to help you become more aware of the kinds of teen behaviors that are really normal and reasonable, the different ways that parents might respond to these typical behaviors, and some tips for managing your responses to maintain or increase the connection you have with your teen.
3. **Is This Reasonable Adolescent Behavior? (15 minutes)**
a) Distribute the “Is This Reasonable Adolescent Behavior?” handout and read the directions.

   b) Ask parents to pair off and assign each pair one of the situations. Let them know they have five minutes to discuss their situations.

   c) After five minutes, reconvene the large group and talk about each of the situations one by one, getting parents’ input. Be sure to focus on the ways that parents’ reactions can impact PCC.

4. **Tips for Responding to Your Teenagers (10 minutes)**
a) Distribute the handout, “Tips for Responding to Your Teenagers” and have volunteers read each of the suggestions.

   b) Ask parents to briefly give some reactions to the handout.

5. **Wrap-Up (5 minutes).**
a) Tell parents that the workshop is coming to a close. Explore their reactions with the following questions:
   - How helpful was this workshop?
   - What are the most important things you learned?
   - What are your goals for your relationship with your teenager?
   - What specific things are you going to do to respond positively to your teen’s need for independence?
Understanding Your Teen’s Behavior

Adolescence is the time in life when young people make the journey out of childhood toward adulthood. It can be a wild ride for both teens and parents! It’s all about change. These are changes that your child must try to understand and changes in your child that you must adjust to.

Adolescents are fun and stimulating, but they can also be confusing and frustrating. Understanding normal teen behavior can reduce the confusion, if not the frustration. Here are two key developmental issues for teens:

Changes in Thinking and Reasoning

Children tend to be **concrete** thinkers. As teenagers, they begin to be able to think **abstractly**. They have new mental tools that allow them to:

- Analyze situations logically in terms of **cause** and **effect**.
- Consider “what might happen if...?”
- Think about their futures, evaluate alternatives, and set personal goals.
- Make mature decisions more often.

As their abilities to think and reason increase, teens will:

- Become increasingly independent.
- Take on increased responsibilities, such as babysitting or summer jobs.
- Begin to consider future careers and occupations.
- Become concerned about social issues such as racism or homelessness.

Teenagers become very focused on themselves and their new abilities. It is normal for them to:

- Argue for the sake of arguing.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Be self-centered.
- Constantly find fault with the adult's point of view.
- Behave like “drama queens” and “drama kings”...at least some of the time.

Social Changes

All these changes allow teens to gain independence from their families:

- As teens mature, their peers become increasingly important.
- More and more, your teens want freedom to do things with their friends.
- Teens typically want more privacy and more time away from you.
What is Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC)?

Definition of PCC

A positive, high quality emotional bond between parent and child that is felt by both parent and child (mutual) and is long lasting (sustained over time).

What does PCC look like?

- Parents and children spend enjoyable time together
- They communicate freely and openly
- They are affectionate and warm with each other
- They trust each other
- They respect and support one another
- They share similar values and respect their differences
- They support each other and make an effort to meet each other’s needs
- They feel optimistic about the family relationship
- Family conflict is at a low level
- Both parents and children are satisfied with the relationship

Benefits of PCC

- Research shows that PCC can be a "super-protector" for children/teens.
- PCC can form a protective barrier between children and the many challenges and risks they face in today's world.
- PCC can help prevent a variety of health and social problems such as drug use, violence, and teenage pregnancy.
Directions:

1. Read the situation you’ve been assigned.
2. Discuss whether the teenager’s behavior seems reasonable. Base your thoughts on what you just learned about adolescent development.
3. Discuss the parent’s reaction. How do you think this response will affect the closeness between parent and teen?
4. Come up with some more positive but realistic ways this parent might respond. (Consider responses that will have the most positive effect on parent-child connectedness.)

Situation 1: Tyree and his Parents

Tyree never likes to go to bed when he’s supposed to. He’s now 15 and his parents have told him that he’s got to be in bed by 11:00pm. Tyree thinks this rule is ridiculous. He says that a lot of the good TV shows are just coming on at 11:00pm. Tyree used to oversleep sometimes, but in the last three months he has gotten up on time and his last report card was very good. He did this to prove that he’s responsible. He asked his parents again if he could just go to sleep when he gets tired. He said he would take responsibility for getting up on time and keeping his grades up. They told him that they would not be responsible parents if they let him stay up after 11:00pm on school nights. They told him he could stay up as late as he wanted on Friday and Saturday night.

Situation 2: Tamika and her Grandmother

Tamika is 14. She has lived with her grandmother since she was five years old. Her grandmother is very strict and expects Tamika to follow her rules. They argue a lot about this. Tamika’s grandmother has told her many times that she is not to walk down to the corner store. Today, when Tamika’s grandmother got home from running errands, Tamika was nowhere to be found. Tamika came home a half an hour later with a bag of chips and a soda from the corner store. Her grandmother grounded her for a week and fussed the entire evening.

Continued
Is This Reasonable Adolescent Behavior?  

Continued

**Situation 3: Telephone English Lessons**

Jamie (13-years old) was lying across his bed talking on the phone to his friend, Sean. His mom pushed the door open and said, “Jamie get off the phone and take the trash out.” With a disgusted look, Jamie said, “Mom, do I have to do it now? I’m on the phone.” “I could care less. Get your butt off the phone...now,” his mom yelled. Jamie got off the phone and asked his mother why she had come into his room without knocking. She told him it was her door and she’ll come in anytime she wants. Jamie said he always knocks on her door when it’s closed. Before he could even finish the sentence his mom cut him off and told him to stop talking back to her. Later that evening, his mom had calmed down. Jamie was back on the phone telling Sean, “I ain’t thinking about nothing you got to say.” His mother smiled, pinched his cheek, and corrected him, “I’m not thinking about anything you have to say.” Jamie just rolled his eyes.

**Situation 4: Dad’s Law**

Robert will be 13 years old in a few months. His dad has always been very concerned about the way Robert dresses - especially for school. He has never bought Robert any baggy clothes and insists that he keep his shirts tucked in his pants neatly. Robert hates the way his dad makes him dress because the other kids are always teasing him. So when he gets to school, Robert pulls his shirt out. His dad goes crazy when Robert comes home looking sloppy. All Robert can say is, “It’s not fair. It’s not fair.” His dad replies, “Life isn’t fair.” One day after dinner Robert’s dad says, “I’ve been thinking that I’ve been kind of hard on you, son. You’re getting older and I know you want to make more of your own decisions. On your 13th birthday I’m going to take you to Old Navy and let you buy some things you like. When we get to the store, I’m going to leave you completely alone while you pick out what you want and try it on. You can just let me know when you’re ready to pay and I’ll meet you at the cash register. The only rule is that you can’t spend more than $70.”
Tips for Responding to Teenagers

✔ Keep in mind that it’s normal for your teens to want to be independent from you. Try to look at their behaviors through that lens.

✔ Admit to yourself when you have overreacted. Go back to your teen. Admit that you overreacted. Apologize if that feels OK to you. Then sit down and begin a real conversation.

✔ Forgive yourself if you’ve responded negatively to your child. Many parents overreact out of fear or concern for their child’s welfare. Remember it’s always possible to recover from these incidents. Usually the first step is going to your child and apologizing. When the relationship has been repaired, you can move on with your teen to a more positive place.

✔ Build a support network around you. Parents who feel supported by friends, family members, clergy, or other trusted professionals, find it easier to deal with frustrating behavior from their teens.

✔ Find out why your teen is behaving in a particular way. Teens say they want parents to “walk a mile in their shoes” and to try to understand their point of view. Remember to listen as much as, or more than, you talk.

✔ Pick your battles. Give your teenagers privacy and allow them to make some of their own important decisions.

✔ Help your teen gain the skills s/he needs to live independently. That is one of your most challenging, but important jobs, as a parent.

✔ Think about how your responses to your teen’s behavior will affect the closeness you share. Try to maintain a close connection with your teen. Remember that when teens feel connected to their parents, they are less likely to get involved in problem behaviors such as drug use or early sexual activity. (However, don’t stop using a firm, fair and consistent set of household rules).
Connectedness and the “Emotional Bank Account”
Introduction
The following information is provided for the program offering this PCC activity to parents and/or teens.

Time Required: 45 minutes

Setting and Audience
This is a self-directed activity for use by both parents and teens ages 14-19. It is written at a 7th grade reading level. The activity could be introduced in a variety of ways:

- As a homework assignment given to youth to be completed independently or with their parents,
- As an activity handed out to parents as part of a workshop or support group, or
- As an activity posted online.

Activity Rationale
For both parents and children, the teen years can be a tough time to try to maintain a positive emotional connection. Parents want what’s best for their children, and almost every parent works hard to raise their children well. Parents make decisions that are necessary to keep teens safe, or to teach them important skills or life lessons. However, these decisions sometimes make teens feel less connected to them, at least for a little while. It is important that teens learn to respect these decisions. It is also equally important that teens feel respected and appreciated for who they are.

This activity will give parents and teens a way to estimate the level of connectedness in their relationship with each other. It will also show them some ways to keep a healthy level of connectedness.

Activity Description
Participants in this self-directed five-part activity will:

1. Read some examples of complaints parents and teens have about each other.
2. Read a story about Keisha and her mother and learn about the “emotional bank account.”
3. Assess how things are going in their relationship with their own parent or teen.
4. Learn about two ways to increase the deposits you are making in your family member’s emotional bank accounts by: a) getting more in touch with their parent’s or teen’s world, and b) sharing appreciations.
Activity Objectives
After completing this activity parents and/or teens will be able to:

- Explain the concept of the “emotional bank account;”
- Estimate the current balance in the “emotional bank account” with their parent or teen;
- Determine their current balance, or level of connectedness;
- Name at least one new thing they have learned about their teen’s or parent’s world; and
- Name one characteristic they value in their teen or parent.
Connectedness and the “Emotional Bank Account”

Directions

This is a self-guided activity that can be completed by parents, teens or both. It contains five parts and should take about 45 minutes to complete.

Read each part of the activity carefully, since the information you need for completing the written parts of the activity is described there. Take some time to think about your answers. At the end, you will have new skills: 1) a way to measure how close you feel to your parent or teenager, and 2) some ways to keep the relationship emotionally positive and strong!

Part 1
Introduction
Time Required: 3 minutes

We commonly see and hear on TV news or in the newspapers about problems with relationships between parents and teens. The truth is, most teens have good relationships with their parents where they both feel close to each other. When parents and teens feel close to each other, we say they have a good connection, or that they have connectedness. We call this parent-child connectedness, or “PCC.”

However, as teens begin the process of becoming adults, they want to do more things on their own or with their friends, and want to make more of their own decisions. This is all normal and natural, but adjusting to it can be tough for both teens and parents.

During this time, parents and teens often get into conflicts. Read the quotes from parents that show these conflicts from a parent’s perspective:

• “I ask my daughter, ‘What’s wrong? Do you have problems you want to talk about?’ But she remains tight lipped. She says nothing—nothing at all.”

• “I hate the way my daughter dresses...all these little skimpy outfits. She gets dressed for school some days, and I’ll say: ‘What are you wearing? You can’t wear that -- It shows too much skin and those shorts are too short.’ And things like that.”

• “My older son and I are always fighting about chores. He’ll say, ‘I can’t wash these, I can’t do this...’ He wants money, but he doesn’t want to earn it. I get annoyed because he should have some responsibility at this age instead of watching TV and hanging out with his friends on the street.”
Read the quotes from teens that show their point of view:

- “Yeah, my dad when you talk to him about something he starts talking and you can’t even talk. He just talks over and over you.”

- “When I try to talk to my mom, she ignores me. If she’s on the computer or watching TV and I ask her a question or tell her something, she won’t respond but as soon as I walk away, she’ll turn around and say ‘What!?!’”

- “My mother is always getting on me over nothing. Like the other day I was on the phone longer than I was supposed to be and I hadn’t put the trash out. I didn’t think it was a big deal.”

These issues are very real for both sides. So, it’s easy to get so focused on conflicts that you lose sight of the positive things in the relationship. That’s a big mistake. In fact, remembering the positive things in a parent/teen relationship makes it easier to get through the hard times.

The next part of the activity suggests a way of tracking how you feel about your parent-teen relationship. The method is similar to how you keep track of how much money you have in a bank account.

**Part 2**

**Emotional Bank Accounts / Keisha’s Story**

Time Required: 20 minutes

All relationships have a kind of imaginary “emotional bank account.”

When you do something to make another person feel good about the relationship, you make a deposit in their emotional bank account.

When there is conflict, the relationship feels less positive. At least one person, and sometimes both people, feels a little less connected to the other. Then we would say that you made a withdrawal from the emotional bank account.

As long as the overall total, or “balance,” of your account is positive over time, you will probably feel close, or connected, to the other person.
The story below shows how both parents and teens can do things to make deposits into, or withdrawals out of, each other’s emotional bank accounts.

Keisha’s Story

Keisha and her mom have always been pretty close. Sometimes after dinner Keisha’s mom will ask her to come watch TV with her in her bedroom. So, Keisha crawls into her mom’s bed and they watch comedy shows and laugh (deposit). A lot of times they’ll talk and Keisha will tell her mom about things happening in her life (deposit). They also go out to eat every Friday night…it’s become a regular thing they both enjoy and look forward to (deposit). When Keisha gets ready to leave for school every morning she gives her mother a big hug and says, “I love you mom” (deposit). Her mom always says, “I love you more” (deposit).

A few weeks ago, Keisha was playing in her first basketball game of the season. Her mother promised that she would leave work early and make it to the game. But at half time her mother still hadn’t shown up (withdrawal). Keisha spent half time feeling really angry and disappointed at her Mom and barely heard what her coach was saying to the team. As the game was ending, Keisha saw her mother coming into the gym.

At the end of the game, Keisha’s mom ran up to her and apologized for being late (deposit). She went to give Keisha a hug (deposit) saying “Honey, I’m so proud of you - you were great!” (deposit). But Keisha was still angry at her mom for missing most of the game. She shrugged off the hug (withdrawal) and said “How would you know, you weren’t even here to see me play!” (withdrawal). The two of them drove home in silence (withdrawal).

After they got home, Keisha sat in her room and thought about the game and the way she treated her mom. She regretted having said such harsh things to her mom and after a little more thinking she realized that she was happy that her mom had made it to even a little bit of the game.

She went and knocked on her Mom’s door. “Come in,” her mom said. “Mom,” Keisha said, “I’m sorry I yelled at you” (deposit). “I know you work hard at your job and I’m glad you got to see me play even if it was just a little bit” (deposit). Her mom got up and hugged her and said “I love you” (deposit). Keisha hugged her back and said “But I love you more” (deposit). They both laughed and jumped on the bed to watch TV together (deposit).

THE END
Questions About *Keisha’s Story*

1) What’s your reaction to this story? Write a couple of sentences or words describing how this story made you feel. Also try to write a little about what it makes you think about your relationship with your own parent or teen.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2) Count up the number of **deposits and withdrawals** made to Keisha’s emotional bank account. Write the number under Keisha’s name **below**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Keisha</strong></th>
<th><strong>Keisha’s mom</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deposits:</td>
<td>Deposits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawals:</td>
<td>Withdrawals:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Also count the number of **deposits and withdrawals** made to her mother’s bank account. Write that number in the space under “Keisha’s Mom” **above**.

4) Overall do you think the events in the story resulted in Keisha and her mom feeling **more** connected and close, **less** connected and close or **the same** as before the story? Circle your answer to this question below.

   More   |   Same   |   Less   
   ------ | -------- | -------- 

5) What kinds of things have you done recently to make a deposit into your (circle one) **parent’s** or **teen’s** account?

   *Example:*

   ____________________________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________________________

6) What have you done that might have made a withdrawal?

   *Example:*

   ____________________________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________________________
Part 3
Assessing Your Own Relationships
Time required: 20 minutes

Some Things “Keisha’s Story” Teaches About Emotional Bank Accounts

Answering the questions about Keisha’s Story, you may have noticed that some events affected both Keisha’s and her Mom’s emotional bank accounts. Other events mostly had an impact on just one person.

Everyone has things that make them feel positive, good, close or connected to another person. Also, we each have things that annoy us, hurt our feelings or make us feel less close or connected to another person. As a result, we have a different “emotional bank account” for each significant relationship in our life.

The imaginary “total” or “balance” in each account shows how much connectedness you feel toward that person. Because people are so different, someone might feel connected to you (they have a positive balance in their emotional bank account) even though you don’t feel the same way (you have a negative balance in the emotional bank account for your relationship with them).

What’s your estimate of the total, or “balance” in your emotional bank account with your parent or with your teenager? How connected do you feel? The chart below represents an emotional bank account. Circle the box that best describes how close or connected you feel to that other person.
If you have a negative balance, you’re probably feeling upset or worried right now. Those feelings are normal and you should let yourself feel that way – it’s okay. Now we’re going to look at some things you can do to get a positive balance in your emotional bank account with another person.

Part 4
Increasing Your Deposits
Time required: 20 minutes

Here are two ways you can make more deposits in the emotional bank account of your parent or teenager:

1. Get more in touch with their world.
2. Show appreciation.

Strategy 1: Get More in Touch with Their World
Deposits can come from learning what is going on in each other’s worlds. Take the time to find out more about another person. Find out their likes, dislikes, goals, hobbies, opinions, feelings, and so on. That makes them feel good, which makes a deposit in their emotional bank account!

There is a saying that “knowledge is power.” In this case, increasing your knowledge about the other person gives you the power to make deposits in their emotional bank account and to increase feelings of closeness and connectedness. Plus, the more you know about the other person, the more you learn about what kinds of things you can do that make them feel cared about and loved. It’s no good trying to do things for someone else if those things don’t actually make them feel good, is it?

Use the Twenty Questions Game on the next page to learn more about your parent or teen. Here are instructions for the game:

- Sit together and take turns trying to answer each question about the other person.
- Give yourselves two points for every right answer.
- Give yourselves one point for listening to the other person give you his/her answer even if you didn’t know it.
- Keep it fun by skipping over any questions you don’t like. You don’t have to do all the questions at one time. You can spread the game out over time and even make up your own questions!
Twenty Questions Game

1. Who are your two closest friends?
2. What is your favorite musical group or type of music?
3. What is your favorite sport to play?
4. What is your favorite holiday?
5. What are two foods you like?
6. What is one food you really hate?
7. What is one accomplishment that you’re really proud of?
8. What is one of your current goals?
9. What are some of your favorite ways to work out or exercise?
10. What is your favorite TV show?
11. What is your favorite movie?
12. What is one thing you’re afraid of or worried about?
13. Who is your favorite relative?
14. What is one of your hopes or wishes for the future?
15. What has been your favorite vacation?
16. What do you most like to do with free time?
17. What is one thing you’re really good at?
18. What is something you would like to be good at?
19. What do you most like to read?
20. What is a present you would like?
Strategy 2: Show Appreciation
Sometimes, the positive feelings between a parent and child get lost in the day-to-day hassles of school, work, after-school activities, and housekeeping. But it’s possible to renew those feelings by thinking and talking about them. For example, it can be surprisingly powerful to tell your teenager or your parent what you appreciate about them. Here’s another activity to try:

What I Appreciate...

From the list below, circle one characteristic that you see in your parent or teenager. If you want, write in a different characteristic on one of the blank lines.

Adventurous Freindly Kind
Affectionate Fun Loyal
Assertive Funny Playful
Calm Generous Polite
Caring Helpful Responsible
Confident Honest Sensitive
Creative Independent Smart

Describe a time when you saw the characteristic you circled in your family member:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Sit with your parent or teenager (maybe riding in the car or at the dinner table) and each of you share a characteristic you appreciate about the other person. Explain why you appreciate this characteristic so much.

Characteristic ________________________________________________________________

Explanation ________________________________________________________________

Part 5
Wrap-Up
Time Required: 2 minutes

This activity gave you a lot of information about maintaining a positive connection with your teen or your parent. To finish this exploration of ways to strengthen positive parent-teen connections, try completing the following sentences:

I want to improve my connection to my parent or teenager by...

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Over the next week I plan to...

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Connectedness
Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Connectedness

Introduction
The following information is provided for the program offering this PCC activity to parents and/or teens.

Time Required: 45 minutes

Setting and Audience
This is a self-directed activity for parents and teens ages 13-19. It is written at a 7th grade reading level. The activity could be used in a variety of ways:

- As a homework activity for youth to be completed independently or with their parents;
- As an activity handed out to parents as part of a workshop or support group; or
- As an activity posted online.

Activity Rationale
Parents and teens often fall into a habit of focusing on negative things. This stands in the way of their having a close, connected relationship. Parents may react with frustration or anger because of the challenges involved in parenting a teen. Teens may make mistakes as they try to walk the path to adulthood. They want their parents to remember that they probably repeated mistakes when they were teens, too! While these mistakes are normal, they can scare parents. Parents may then react in ways that are harsh and critical. Also, parents often get frustrated when teens make the same mistakes over and over again.

Teens want more independence. They question the decisions and authority of parents more often than they did when they were younger. They want to be treated as adults even though they are still trying to figure out what that means. Sometimes parents don’t recognize these facts, don’t give independence and criticize teens for their mistakes, instead of supporting them. As a result, teens feel powerless and discouraged and are drawn into negative thinking.

This activity will help parents and teens identify their tendencies toward being drawn into negativity. It will also help them learn to use positive reinforcement as a way to increase their connectedness with each other.
**Activity Description**
This is a six-part activity:

- **Part 1:** About “Knee-Jerk” Reactions
- **Part 2:** Criticism: A Common Knee-Jerk Reaction
- **Part 3:** Recovering from Knee-Jerk Reactions
- **Part 4:** Using Positive Reinforcement
- **Part 5:** Examples of Positive Reinforcement
- **Part 6:** Wrap-up

In Parts 1 and 2, parents and teens will learn about “knee-jerk reactions”- reactions that are driven by emotion. They will look at how to prevent these reactions, while also acknowledging that these reactions are going to happen. In Part 3, parents and teens are given a three-step method for recovering from knee-jerk reactions and repairing the damage they do to connectedness. Parts 4 and 5 of the activity focus on one of the three steps, positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is defined and they are shown how to use it to maintain or improve connectedness. In Part 6, parents and teens think about their own relationships and list some behaviors that they want to increase.

**Activity Objectives**
After participating in the activity, parents and/or teens will be able to:

- Identify “knee-jerk” reactions.
- Forgive themselves for their “knee-jerk” reactions.
- Understand how a concern differs from a criticism.
- Move from “knee-jerk” reactions to other positive behaviors.
- Use the three methods for giving positive reinforcement.
Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Connectedness

Part 1
About “Knee-Jerk” Reactions
Time Required:  3 minutes

Relationships between parents and teens are full of emotions like laughter, joy, fear, anger, worry and pride. Often, parents and teens act from the emotions they’re feeling. While it’s normal to act on your emotions, it’s also important to recognize that emotional reactions can come out abruptly and without thinking about them.

Emotional reactions that happen abruptly can be called knee-jerk reactions. This name comes from the fact that these reactions are reflexive, meaning automatic. They are like the muscle reflex that makes your leg move when a doctor taps your knee with a rubber hammer.

It is important to have relationships with parents and teens where it is okay to express emotions. Feeling your raw emotional reactions is normal and healthy. However, expressing them without thinking about how they might affect the other person doesn’t always produce the best results in relationships.

There will be times when we have knee-jerk reactions. We can’t always help it –that’s why it’s called a “reflex!” Recognize this fact and don’t expect yourself to be perfect! Knee-jerk reactions are not the end of the world. Relationships between parents and teens are strong enough to handle a few knee-jerk reactions without too much damage. Usually any damage done to connectedness by knee-jerk reactions can be fixed.

Part 2
Criticism: A Common Knee-Jerk Reaction
Time Required:  15 minutes

Parents and teenagers usually have complaints about each other. It’s a normal part of any relationship. To stay close to each other despite your complaints, it’s good to be able to talk about things that are bothering you. It helps you understand each other better and fix the cause of the complaint, if possible.
The best way to talk about what’s bothering you is to state a concern. Here’s what we mean by stating a concern:

**Concerns:** Are specific -- **limited to one situation.** They describe **how you feel.**

*Example:* “I am upset because you didn’t take out the garbage **tonight.**”

What usually happens when someone has a knee-jerk reaction is that instead of stating a concern, they **criticize** the other person. Criticism is different from stating a concern:

**Criticism:** Is very general or “global” and **blames** the other person. You’ll often find the word “always” or “never” in a criticism. Criticisms get worse if you start name-calling.

*Example:* “I can never depend on you. You never take out the trash. You’re lazy.”

Stating a concern is a skill you can learn and practice. Remember, it takes time to change the way you communicate. Teach yourself this skill one step at a time using these three steps:

**Learning to State Concerns Instead of Criticisms**

1. **Recognize** when you have criticized or complained instead of stating a concern.
2. **Set a goal** to state what you’re feeling as a concern in the next similar situation.
3. **Think ahead** about how you will state a concern and **practice** how you will say it. Write it down or practice saying it in front of a mirror to help you get it right.

To help practice this skill, complete the worksheet titled “Concern or Criticism?” on the following pages.
Concern or Criticism?

Below are some statements that a parent might hear from a teenager or a teenager might hear from their parent. Decide which statements are worded as concerns and which are worded as criticisms. Write “CON” in the space next to the statements that you think are concerns, and write “CRIT” in the space next to the statements that you think are criticisms.

CON or CRIT?

1. Dad, you’re always getting on my back over stupid stuff. __________

2. Katrina, you’re lazy and irresponsible. I get tired of having to tell you a million times to clean up after yourself. __________

3. Mom, I didn’t like it when you came home and went right to bed. We didn’t do anything fun last night. __________

4. Juan, when I asked you what happened in school today and you said “nothing,” I felt sad because we weren’t talking. __________

5. Girl, have you lost your mind? You look like a slut going out of the house in those outfits you wear. __________

6. When you ignored my question a minute ago, I felt like you didn’t care about me. __________

7. It bothered me when you just said “I know what you’re going through because I was a teenager once.” I wish you’d notice how things have changed since you were growing up. __________

8. You never listen to me and you’re always talking over me! I can’t wait to get out of this house! __________

Continue by answering the questions on the following page.
Concern or Criticism? *Continued*

Which of the statements on the sheet would make you feel upset or defensive?

______________________________________________________________________________

Which of the statements seem reasonable?

______________________________________________________________________________

Try re-writing several of the criticisms to turn them into concerns.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

If you thought statements 3, 4, 6 and 7 were stated as concerns, you were right. These statements are **specific, limited to one situation**, and they are based on **how the person feels**.
Part 3
Recovering from Knee-Jerk Reactions
Time Required: 10 minutes

Criticism is one common type of knee-jerk reaction. Knee-jerk reactions come from strong emotion. The over-generalizing and blaming that is at the heart of criticism come from all those strong emotions.

Other signs of a knee jerk reaction are:
- Emotion you can see in facial expressions or body language (for example, tears or an angry, red-faced look).
- The reaction interrupts someone else who is already speaking.
- A short, sharp way of talking.

As we said before, you are not going to stop all your knee-jerk reactions. So, what can you do to recover from a knee-jerk reaction and repair the negative effect it has had on your closeness with your parent or teen?

Follow the three steps listed in the box below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOVERING FROM A KNEE-JERK REACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Notice the reaction &amp; forgive yourself for having it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Apologize to the other person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Find something positive as a way to move forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent-Child Connectedness: New Interventions for Teen Pregnancy Prevention
ETR Associates with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Part 4
Using Positive Reinforcement
Time Required: 5 minutes

Remember the three steps for recovering from a knee-jerk reaction? The third step, saying something positive, makes the other person feel a lot better about him- or herself, and about you and about your relationship. **Saying something positive about someone or something they are doing is called positive reinforcement.** The word “reinforcement” in the phrase “positive reinforcement” means that the person receiving the positive statement is likely to do even *more* positive things because they like being complimented or rewarded for doing the right thing.

For example, if parents let their teen stay up a little later because they are getting good grades, that teen will typically try to continue getting good grades so they can stay up later in the future. So, if you want your teenager, or your parent, to do certain things:
- Compliment them when they behave the way you want, and/or
- Give them something they like.

These are two basic types of using positive reinforcement.

**DON'T wait until you need to fix a knee-jerk reaction** to say positive things about your parent or your teen!

Learning to use positive reinforcement is easy. The three steps of positive reinforcement are almost exactly the same as the three steps in recovering from a knee-jerk reaction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Notice or call attention to the behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Praise the behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Show your appreciation – say thank you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. As with recovering from a knee-jerk reaction, you are noticing a behavior. This time, though, it is the *other person’s behavior*, and not your own emotional reaction you have to recognize.
2. Since the behavior you’re recognizing is positive, instead of apologizing for your behavior, *you are praising* the other person’s behavior and saying what’s good about it.
3. Finally, thank the person and/or give them something to show that you really appreciate the behavior.
Part 5
Examples of Positive Reinforcement
Time Required: 10 minutes

In a different parent-child connectedness activity, we presented a story about Keisha and her mother. Find the handout titled “Keisha’s Story” with a short version of that story. The story gives an example of recovering from a knee-jerk reaction. Read the shortened version of the story.

Imagine that Keisha’s mom makes it to her next basketball game on time. Keisha wants to use positive reinforcement in the hopes that it will help her mother make it to another game on time. So Keisha says something like:

Mom, you made it to the game on time! (Keisha recognizes the behavior)

I know it’s hard for you to leave work early -- it’s great that you made it! (She praises her mother’s behavior)

Thanks, Mom. It means a lot to me. (She showed her appreciation)

When you’re using positive reinforcement, it’s important to be:

- **Sincere** – Only say it if you mean it.
- **Specific** – Tell the person exactly what s/he did that you liked.
- **Immediate** – Use positive reinforcement as soon as possible after you see the behavior

Here’s another example:

Juan’s father was happy to see Juan come outside and join him as he was working on his car. They worked side by side and before long Juan was telling his dad about a girl that he liked. His dad gave him some advice about how to treat girls. It was cool. Later they went to the store and got some sodas. On the way home, Juan’s father said:

Juan, it was great having your help on the car today. (Juan’s father recognized the behavior immediately. He was sincere and specific.)

You’re a fast learner and you handled the tools well. I’m proud of you. (He praised the behavior.)

Thank you for helping me, son. I enjoyed having you with me today and hope we can do it more. (He showed his appreciation.)
Keisha’s Story

Keisha and her mom have always been pretty close. Sometimes after dinner, Keisha’s mom will ask her to come watch TV with her in her bedroom. A lot of times they’ll talk and Keisha will tell her mom about things happening in her life. They also go out to eat every Friday night - it’s become a regular thing they both enjoy and look forward to. When Keisha leaves for school they hug and say “I love you” to each other.

Keisha was playing in her first basketball game of the season. Her mother promised that she would make it to the game. At half time her mother still hadn’t arrived. Keisha spent half time feeling really angry and disappointed at her Mom.

As the game was ending, Keisha saw her mother coming into the gym. At the end of the game, Keisha’s mom ran up to her and apologized for being late. She went to give Keisha a hug saying “Honey, I’m so proud of you - you were great!” But Keisha was still angry at her mom for missing most of the game. She shrugged off the hug and said “How would you know, you weren’t even here to see me play!” The two of them drove home in silence.

After they got home Keisha sat in her room and thought about the game and the way she treated her mom. She regretted having said harsh things to her mom and realized that she was happy that her mom had made it to even a little bit of the game.

She went and knocked on her Mom’s door. “Mom,” Keisha said, “I’m sorry I yelled at you. I know you work hard at your job and I’m glad you got to see me play even if it was just a little bit.” They hugged, said “I love you” to each other and lay down on the bed to watch TV together.

THE END
Part 6
Wrap-Up
Time required: 2 minutes

Now you know how to use positive reinforcement. Think about your relationship with your parent or your teenager. What are some behaviors that you like and that you want to see more of? **List them here:**


The next time you see any of these behaviors, use positive reinforcement as soon as possible. Think in advance about how you might recognize the behavior, praise the behavior, and show your appreciation. Be sincere and specific.
Active Listening to Provide Emotional Support
Active Listening to Provide Emotional Support

Acknowledgement
This workshop is adapted from ETR’s 2003 *Wait for Sex* curriculum, the development of which was funded by the federal Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs.

Rationale
Active listening is both common to, and critical to, several important life skills. It is a fundamental part of good communication and effective conflict resolution. In the area of adolescent reproductive health and teen pregnancy prevention, it has been used in teaching parents how to communicate with their teen children about sex and contraception. In that context, parents are typically taught the skill to improve the accuracy with which they identify the values, level of knowledge and questions and concerns that their teens have about sexual activity, the reproductive system and contraceptive availability and use. Sometimes other positive aspects of active listening are identified when it is used this way, such as its capacity to prevent parents from lecturing or interrupting thereby making space for their children to share their experiences, values, questions and concerns.

All of these are positive instrumental uses of active listening in a teen pregnancy prevention context. Furthermore, there is no shortage of active listening lesson plans. So why present yet another one here? We have chosen to do so here to emphasize the importance of active listening to increasing *connectedness*, an outcome that can be inferred in the other uses of the skill described above, but is not explicit.

**Good communication, feeling supported, feeling listened to and feeling understood and appreciated for who they really are – these are factors that increase feelings of connectedness for both teens and parents.** The experience of these, and other factors can be increased through the use of active listening. Which of us hasn’t felt more connected to someone else because they demonstrated the qualities of a good listener? This feeling of connectedness makes teens more open to effective messages and modeling in relation to their choices about sexual behavior and other behaviors as well.

**Time Required**
One 90-minute session or two 45-minute sessions
Setting and Audience
This activity is designed to be led by an experienced facilitator in any one of a variety of settings, including:

- A lunch-time workshop series in a work setting
- Workshops at community-based organizations
- Workshops sponsored by schools
- Workshops sponsored by communities of faith
- Support groups (formal and informal)
- Weekend retreats

The audience for the activity is parents of adolescents ages 11-19.

Workshop Description
In Part 1 of this workshop:

- Parents participate in a listening exercise designed to emphasize the importance of, and advantage of, being an active listener.
- Parents learn a three-part definition of communication.
- Parents identify a time when someone actively listened to them and connect this experience to increased feelings of trust, validation, emotional support and overall “connectedness.”
- Parents generate their own list of the qualities of a good listener.

In Part 2 of this workshop:

- Parents observe and analyze a demonstration of active listening techniques using the list of the qualities of a good active listener as criteria.
- Parents review a list of “conversation starters” they can use to get their teens talking.
- Parents practice active listening in pairs.
- Parents identify potential barriers to practicing active listening and brainstorm ways of overcoming those barriers.
- Parents identify the potential benefits of active listening to connectedness and personalize their learning by anticipating how these benefits may materialize in their relationships with their own teenage children.

Workshop Objectives
At the completion of parts 1 and 2 of this workshop, parents will be able to:

- Describe how using active listening skills can increase their teens’ sense of being supported emotionally by them as parents and how in can increase their connectedness with their children;
- Identify barriers to active listening and ways to overcome those barriers; and
- Practice and demonstrate effective active listening skills.
Active Listening to Provide Emotional Support

Learning Activity, Part 1

1. **Introduction** (15 minutes)
   a) Welcome parents and introduce yourself.
   b) Ask parents to introduce themselves and conduct the brief warm-up activity you have chosen. Outline the following ground rules to help create a safe and comfortable environment for today’s discussion:
      - Listen with an open mind.
      - Respect different points of view.
      - Take care of yourself – trust your gut.
      - Share the time with each other – don’t dominate the discussion.
      - Ask any questions – there is no such thing as a stupid question.
      - Recognize that it’s normal to feel a range of feelings – joy, sadness, anger, guilt, etc. – when discussing your childhood and your own children.
      - Recognize that all parents want the best for their children and are doing the best they can with what they currently know and understand. All parents have both strengths and challenges.
c) Tell parents that often when people think of communication, they think about how to talk or **send** a message. Explain that today’s session is going to focus on another equally important part of communication — listening — using active listening skills. Active listening skills are important to effective communication and equally as important to connection.

By actively listening to your children, you increase their feelings of being understood, of being accepted for who they are and of being supported emotionally. All of these things build trust and have a huge impact on how much connectedness there is in the relationship. More trust and more connectedness often leads to more communication and so on. Your children/teens will be more likely to come to you with questions, concerns or decisions regarding sexuality and other important areas of their development if they trust and feel connected to you.

d) Review the learning objectives (written on flipchart paper) for this session with participants.

2. **Icebreaker** (5 minutes)
   a) Tell the group that before you get started with the session, you would like to play a quick game about listening.
   b) Give each parent a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell parents that you are going to give them a set of instructions. You will read the instructions once only so they have to listen carefully before writing anything down.
   c) Ask parents to answer the following questions:
      - Your spouse asks you to bring home meat, milk, cheese and bread. You bring home milk, bread and meat.
        What did you forget?
      - Your supervisor at work asks you to go to Office 3-1-5, look in the right-hand drawer of the desk, and bring you a blue box that was left there.
        Once you get to the office, will you look in the right or left drawer of the desk?
        Are you going to Office 5-3-1-, 3-1-5, or 1-3-5?
      - You are the driver of a school bus. At the first stop, 13 children get on. At the next stop, five children get on and two get off. At the next stop, eight children get on and one gets off.
        How old is the bus driver?
d) The facilitator should check the group’s answers after reading the four questions.
   - Cheese
   - Right
   - 3-1-5
   - Each participant’s own age

e) Ask parents what they thought of this activity. Take a few responses. Point out to the group that no matter how effective you were at giving instructions, communication could not take place unless they (the parents) were listening.

3. Defining Communication (5 minutes)
   a) Write the word “Communication” on flipchart paper. Ask the group for their definition of communication. Take a few responses. Be sure that the working definition for this session reads something like this:

   **Communication**

   Communication is a three-part process where messages are sent, received and understood between two or more people.

   The facilitator may want to draw two faces like the ones below on a dry erase board, blackboard or flipchart paper. Show parents how communication requires one person to give messages about an idea, feeling or problem, and another person to receive and understand those messages. The facilitator can demonstrate this process by drawing arrows (as seen below) from one face to another.

   ![Diagram of communication process](image)

   - Laura gives messages by talking and using body language.
   - Carlos receives and understands Laura’s messages by being an active listener.

   ★ = Laura’s message (It might be an idea, a feeling, a problem, an opinion, etc.)
b) Tell parents that today’s session is going to focus on the second and third parts of the communications process — receiving and understanding messages. The technique they are going to learn for receiving and understanding messages is called active listening because the listener (the parent) really has to be “active,” that is make a strong effort to receive and understand messages from the person (the child/teen) giving messages.

4. Defining the Qualities and Behaviors of an Active Listener (20 minutes)
   a) Ask parents to think of a time in their lives when they needed someone to listen to them. This time might be in the recent past or from their childhoods. Maybe they had a problem to talk about, maybe they were sad or angry about something, or maybe they were excited about something that was happening to them.

   b) Facilitate a discussion with the seven questions listed below.

   Question 1: Who did you choose to talk to? Why did you choose this person?

   Question 2: What qualities did this person have that made him/her a good listener?

   The facilitator should record the answers to this question on flipchart paper. The facilitator may need to add some of the qualities listed below to the list generated by parents. Be sure the final list looks something like the following list:

   • Was patient, didn’t rush me
   • Let me talk, did not interrupt
   • I know he or she would not gossip and would be confidential
   • Was not judgmental
   • Was calm, warm (body language, tone of voice)
   • I could trust the person
   • Made good eye contact with me
   • Nodded his or her head when I was talking
   • Understood my feelings (i.e., “It sounds like you are feeling worried.”)
   • Made sure he or she understood what I was saying by repeating back or summarizing what I said (i.e., “So let me see if I understand. Your friend said she would call you back, but it’s been three days and you haven’t heard from her.”)
The facilitator may want to emphasize at this point that these are all skills we can learn. Tell the group that this list will become the criteria for active listening that we will use later when we actually practice active listening.

**Question 3:** How did it feel to be listened to?

**Question 4:** Did you ever have an experience when you wanted to be listened to, but the other person was not a good listener? How did that feel?

**Question 5:** What did that person do that made him or her into a poor listener?

The facilitator should record the responses to this question on flipchart paper. The facilitator may need to add some of the following qualities to the list generated by parents. Be sure the final list looks something like:

- Interrupted, did not let me talk
- Used uninviting body language (harsh tone of voice, closed body posture, no eye contact)
- Laughed at me
- Minimized what I was saying — “All kids go through this. It’s nothing to worry about.” Or “You are only a teenager. How stressful can your problems be?”
- Advised or told me what to do without listening to me — “If I were you, I would ...”
- Put me down, insulted me — “That’s a stupid idea.”

**Question 6:** Why is it sometimes difficult for people to be good listeners? What are some possible barriers to listening?

The facilitator does not have to write these ideas on flipchart paper. Some possible responses follow:

- Don’t know how to listen
- Don’t have time to listen
- Not understanding someone because of language, unclear messages, crying, etc.
- Feeling tired or sick
- Feeling distracted by other problems on his/her mind or by things going on in the background like a phone ringing, baby crying, etc.
- Wanting to “solve” the problem in order to be helpful
- Wanting to redirect conversation about him/herself instead of staying focused on the person talking and his/her story
**Question 7:** Do you think parents are always good listeners to their children/teens? Why or why not? Do the lists that we’ve just made apply to parent/child relationships as well?

c) Tell the group that in part two of the session they will use these two lists as guides of what TO DO and what NOT TO DO while practicing active listening.

d) Remind parents of how important body language is to being a good listener. Body language includes things like body movements, facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures.

e) Making eye contact and facing your child shows them you are interested and paying attention. Explain that some psychologists believe that 80% of what a person communicates is through his or her body language rather than the words that come out of his or her mouth!

f) Tell the group that you want them to note four key skills that help people be active listeners. The facilitator should put a star next to these four skills on the flipchart to help them stand out to the participants. These four skills are:
   - Facing your teen and making eye contact,
   - Letting your teen talk without interrupting,
   - Nodding to your teen occasionally as she or he speaks to show that it’s okay for them to keep talking, and
   - Checking to see if you understand thoughts and feelings.

g) If you are ending your session here, ask parents to give themselves a homework assignment to use these four skills at least once with their teen between now and the next session. Ask them to pay attention to what happens when they practice these four skills.
Learning Activity, Part 2

If You are Splitting this Activity Across Two Sessions...

1. Spend five to ten minutes reviewing the key points of Part 1 as a “warm-up” to the activities of Part 2. (This will require you to shave a little time off of each of the other activities in Part 2.) One or both of the following activities are suggested for this review/warm-up:
   - Use the list of “qualities of a good listener” generated in Part 1 to have participants identify one quality they feel they possess. Encourage the group to affirm/validate each person using applause or verbal affirmations.
   - Identify one or more participants who practiced one or more of the four key listening skills with their teen in between sessions. Ask them to describe what happened when they practiced the skill(s).

1. Active Listening Demonstration (10 minutes)
   a) Tell the group that you would like to demonstrate active listening. Ask for a volunteer who would be willing to talk to you in front of the room for two-three minutes or so while you demonstrate active listening. The volunteer can talk about anything. Suggest they choose a topic from the list of conversation starters on the next page if the volunteer feels stuck.

   b) Ask the volunteer to start talking to you. In this first simulation, the facilitator should demonstrate as many of the behaviors possible that have been identified as behaviors NOT to do to be a good listener (i.e., interrupt, laugh, look around the room instead of at the volunteer, etc.). Allow this simulation to last about one minute.

   c) After the simulation, ask the group to point out all the things you did that were ineffective. After the group identifies these behaviors, ask the volunteer how it felt when you interrupted or laughed at him, etc.

   d) Repeat the simulation with the volunteer, but now demonstrate as many of the behaviors possible that were identified as behaviors that contribute to good active listening, especially the four skills highlighted earlier (i.e., eye contact, nodding, not interrupting, checking for understanding of thoughts and feelings).

   e) After the simulation, ask the group to point out all the things you did that were effective. After the group identifies these behaviors, ask the volunteer how it felt to be listened to.
2. **Active Listening Practice** (25 minutes)
   a) Now tell the group they will have a chance to practice what was just demonstrated. Divide the group into pairs.

   b) Ask one person to be the active listener and one person to talk about something.

   c) Ask the participant who is going to talk to choose one of the conversation starters from the list below to help them start talking. (Have these written on flipchart paper and posted in front of the room before the start of the session. The facilitator should also be prepared to read the starters out loud for parents who have limited reading ability or limited English proficiency.)

   **Conversation Starters**
   - What did you like about going to school?
   - What was really hard about being a teenager?
   - What do you like to do in your spare time?
   - What are some of your plans for the future?
   - What do you find really rewarding about being a parent?
   - If you had five minutes to talk with the president of the United States, what would you tell him?
   - Anything else parents want to talk about!

   Remind parents of the four key skills they should try to practice when listening to each other:
   - Eye contact,
   - Nodding occasionally in the affirmative,
   - Not interrupting, and
   - Checking for understanding of thoughts and feelings.

   d) Instruct the participant who is going to talk that they should keep talking for at least three minutes, saying anything that occurs to them about their selected topic.

   e) Now ask the listener in the pair to be as effective a listener as possible.
f) After three minutes, ask the groups to stop and spend 5-10 minutes discussing the exercise:
   - Which of the four key skills did the listener use?
   - Ask them to think about what else the listener could have done to be even more effective, if anything.
   - Ask them how, if at all, the level of connectedness between the talker and listener in their pair changed during the exercise.
   - Ask them what other feelings, if any, came up for each of them during the exercise.

g) Ask the group to switch roles and repeat steps c) to f).

h) After the second round of practice and discussion is completed, and if time allows, ask for a couple of volunteers to demonstrate active listening in front of the group. The facilitator and the rest of the group should observe and then give the volunteers positive and constructive feedback on their active listening practice using the criteria for effective listening generated in Part 1.

3. Bring Active Listening Home (8 minutes)
   a) Facilitate a brief discussion with the following questions:
      - How do you think active listening will help you feel more connected with your kids? Give some examples.
      - How will you overcome some of the barriers mentioned earlier under the “Defining the Qualities and Behaviors of an Active Listener” section?

4. Closing Summary (2 minutes)
   a) Remind parents that active listening is a key skill for parents (or anyone, really) to have. Active listening can help us and our kids feel respected, cared about, validated and connected. Feeling connected to, and respected by, parents is key in helping youth feel supported and avoid risky behaviors. By feeling listened to, young people feel connected to their parents and their parents’ values.

   b) Thank parents for their participation and their time.