

BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH YOUTH

Relationship Building Tools with Youth: One of your primary responsibilities (and gifts) as an Adult Leader is to develop significant relationships with students. This might seem intimidating at times, so here are some tools to help empower you to initiate relationships with students and demonstrate your interest in them.



Dive deeper with your fellow leaders: In an ideal situation, Adult Leaders would have an Adult Leader only meeting before a meeting with youth. You can use this resource at that gathering as well to get to know each other and practice using these tools.

Also, as a group of Adult Leaders, you could take the Myers Brigg personality quiz at <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test> and discuss how this information helps you work together. Which adults on your team are the early risers or the night owls? Who is a planner and who just goes with the flow? (and if you have an early riser/planner - you hit the jackpot and should immediately encourage them to attend the morning adult leader meetings!)

10 Tips for Engaging Youth

Engaging with students is overwhelming for many adults. Teenagers seem to speak their own language, observe their own social codes, and in some cases behave as a culture unto themselves. As an adult, it is not your role to become part of the culture, but to be an effective ambassador. Listen, share, laugh, give, and take delight in the students in your care. Here are a few ideas from DCE Leah Abel that can get you started.

1. Don't stand in a corner and wait for a teen to talk to you. Be bold. Approach teens standing alone or teens in groups and introduce yourself. "Hi, I'm_____. I should know your name but I'm sorry I don't." This is scary but remember, you're not in high school and you don't have to be cool... just genuine, kind, caring.
2. Ask about safe things... what year are you in high school? Where do you live? What the best thing about your life right now? What inspires you? (there are more listed below and a "game" to help you get started)
3. At youth events, join in as much as possible... be a participant with youth: play games, be in discussion groups, spread out.
4. Affirm teens honestly every way you can: you're having a great hair day, I noticed you are so comfortable talking to others, I noticed you always willing to help, I noticed you seem to be a great listener...
5. If there are 10 teens in the room tonight make sure you talk to all 10 tonight.
6. Don't try to be a teen but don't go parental if you're not the parent. Listen, affirm, if you feel life advice is needed, ask permission to give it: "Would you like to know how a parent might think in this situation?" Even: "Is it more important for me to just listen right now or are you looking for guidance on that?"
7. Build bridges between parents and teens: do listen but don't take sides. When you can, help teens understand what it means to honor parents in certain situations. A good question to ask is... "Wow, what do you think God wants you to do in this situation?"

8. Men, build relationships with guys. Women, build relationships with girls. When you are building relationships across gender be very sure to keep the topics safe. In general, never be alone with teens or plan outings alone.
9. Always listen more than you talk. Listen for understanding. Ask open-ended questions. Don't share your wild teenage experiences as a way to impress teens or build common ground unless something you learned could be of benefit in a situation they have discussed.
10. Always be looking for ways to protect teens in groups... meaning pull loners into activities or conversations, steer the group away from put downs or sarcasm, etc. In general, never yell or never use any kind of physical discipline.

Getting Started

Start with a Large Group

Game: Either/Or (or any game to start a meeting and break the ice)

This is a forced value or forced choice game. Explain that they may sometimes feel like they are neither, but they "get" to choose one or the other. You can do this casually at a meal or involve them physically by having them go to opposite sides of the room. Either way, have people share with a small group or with the whole group for what reason they choose what they did. You may preface each choice with a question (i.e.-Would you rather travel in a...Hot air balloon or sports car? Or When you shop for groceries are you...Random/Deliberate?) or simply have read the two items and let their minds fly with the reasons why they might be Either / Or.

- Morning person / Night person
- Planner / Wing-er
- Plain / Jelly-filled
- Phoebe / Monica (from *Friends*)
- Dwight / Jim (from *The Office*)
- Extrovert / Introvert (doesn't mean you like or dislike people... just how you recharge your energy stores... with people, or alone)
- Random / Deliberate
- iPhone / Android
- Netflix / Amazon Prime
- Hot air balloon / sports car
- Mountain Cabin / Oceanview cottage
- Sunset / Sunrise

**come up with your own creative Either / Or choices. The possibilities are endless!

Move into Small Groups

100 Questions (a tool for listening and engaging)

This "game" is extremely effective when talking with adults or youth. It is affectionately known as 100 Questions. When playing, start off by asking a basic question. For example, "Sarah, what is something you like to do?" Then after she responds, take a bit of information and ask questions about that.

Sarah: "I like to listen to music."

You: "What type of music do you like to listen to?"

Sarah: "Imagine Dragons, Ed Sheeran, Maroon 5, Taylor Swift, and Pink"

(Note: take 1 piece of information and ask about it.)

You: "Oh yeah, what do you like about Imagine Dragons?"

Sarah: "Dan Reynolds is amazing."

You: "What does Dan Reynolds do that's amazing?"

The great thing about this game is that you can truly invest in a relationship and not know a thing about Dan Reynolds, Maroon 5, or any band, but you are showing interest in their life and caring. This game is almost foolproof if you're committed to asking questions as long as the response provides more to ask about. Students typically love to talk about themselves, so if you keep asking, they'll keep talking. Avoid making it sound like it's an interrogation!

Practice asking a student from your church questions and see where you can go with it. Set some goals like, "I'm going to talk with a new student each time I'm at church." Soon enough you will be engaged in their lives and have the opportunity to share your faith or speak truth.

9 Conversation-Starting Questions

Here are some questions to start 100 Questions:

1. What's your favorite food? Favorite sport? Type of music?
2. Which is better: the mountains or the beach? Playing video games or sports? Hamburgers or hot dogs? Coke or Pepsi?
3. What's your family like? How many brothers/sisters do you have?
4. Who's your best friend? What do you like to do together?
5. What's the best movie you've watched lately?
6. If the earth was destroyed and you were able to escape, which three people and what three things would you take with you?
7. If you go anywhere, where would you go?
8. What activities are you involved in?
9. If you could do anything this year, what would you do?

8 Conversation to Take Your Conversation to the Next Level

The point of talking with students is to develop a trusting relationship with them. After finding out their fun facts, begin asking questions that will move your conversations deeper. Note: You should not move through all levels of questions in the first night, or use all questions with the same youth. Building relationships takes time and shows that you are committed to developing your understanding of the youth.

1. What is your big dream in life? What hurdles are preventing you from reaching that goal, and how do you plan to overcome them?
2. What has recently impacted your life? How has it changed you?
3. What life-lessons have you learned? How did you learn them?
4. Do your friends challenge you to be better? Do you challenge them?
5. What types of situations create uneasiness? Fear? Doubt?
6. What about the Youth Gathering might be a brand new experience for you? How do you react in new situations?
7. What are you hoping to learn through this experience?
8. What ways can you use your strengths through this youth gathering experience? Leadership? Humor? Encouragement?