

# Guides for Youth Ministry Leaders

The handouts included here address many topics related to training volunteer youth ministry leaders (see chapter 11, "Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders," of the *Total Faith™ Initiative Coordinator's Manual*).

The following are suggested uses for the handouts:

- ◆ preparing a new volunteer or a volunteer who is new to a particular role
- ◆ using one handout a month as part of leadership training for a youth ministry team (To supplement these handouts with activities, see *All Together Now! A Seriously Fun Collection of Interactive Training Games and Activities*, by Lorraine L. Ukens [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1999].)
- ◆ offering a parent night on adolescent development by using the "Understanding Youth Today" and "Relating to Youth" handouts
- ◆ conducting a chaperone workshop by using the "Serving as a Chaperone," "Serving as a Driver," and "Sharing Faith with Youth" handouts
- ◆ preparing a retreat team for their roles by using the "Leading a Small Group," "Giving a Presentation," "Leading an Icebreaker or Community Builder," and "Leading Prayer with Adolescents" handouts (Also see chapter 19, "Giving a Witness Talk," in *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*.)

## Handouts

1. Understanding Youth Today: Younger Adolescents
2. Understanding Youth Today: Older Adolescents
3. Understanding Youth Today: Generational Insights
4. Sharing Faith with Youth
5. Leading a Small Group
6. Serving as a Chaperone
7. Serving as a Driver
8. Giving a Presentation
9. Leading an Icebreaker or a Community Builder
10. Leading Prayer with Adolescents
11. Relating to Youth

# Understanding Youth Today: Younger Adolescents

## **The Changes in Younger Adolescents (Ages 10 to 15, Grades 7 to 9)**

### **Physical Development**

- developing secondary sex characteristics and the capacity to reproduce
- being sensitive about physical changes and confused about their emerging sexuality
- incorporating their bodily changes into their own self-image as a male or a female

### **Intellectual Development**

- beginning to move from concrete thinking (what is) to abstract thinking (what might be true if . . . )
- questioning and testing adults' statements and evaluating adults' values
- being painfully self-conscious and critical, idealistic, argumentative, self-centered
- expanding interests; intense, short-term enthusiasm

### **Identity Development**

- requiring time to reflect upon the new reactions they receive from others and to build a consistent self-image from the different mirrors in which they see themselves
- discovering who they are as unique persons with abilities, interests, and goals
- seeking limited independence and autonomy from parents and adults

### **Moral Development**

- engaging in more complex decision-making processes
- resolving moral dilemmas in terms of the expectations of someone or something other than themselves, which can be (a) family, friends, or other significant persons, or (b) what the law or the system of good order calls for in a given situation

### **Interpersonal Development**

- relying on parents and families in setting values and giving affection
- identifying more strongly with the peer group for belonging and friendships

- entering a broader social world of middle school, peer groups, and activity groups
- developing the ability to consider the feelings and needs of others in relationships
- learning how to relate to the opposite sex (what to say and how to behave)

### **Faith Development**

- deriving their faith from parents and family
- developing their faith and identity, establishing a set of religious beliefs, attitudes, and values, through the experiences of participation and belonging in a caring faith community where they are valued

## **Implications for Ministry, or Developmental Needs of Younger Adolescents**

### **Self-Definition**

- opportunities to better understand, define, and accept who they are as individuals
- opportunities to explore their widening social world and to reflect upon the meaning of new experiences in order to consider themselves participants in society
- opportunities for young adolescents of ethnic cultures to achieve a positive orientation toward their own culture and to affirm their ethnicity through observation of ceremonies, retention of native languages, and reinforcement of specific attitudes, beliefs, and practices

### **Competence and Achievement**

- opportunities to find out what they are good at doing and to know that what they do is valued by others whom they respect
- opportunities that encourage the practice of new skills, public performance and recognition, and reflection on personal and group accomplishments

### **Positive Social Interaction with Adults and Peers**

- opportunities to develop interpersonal skills
- opportunities to learn how to develop a relationship with their parents that is reflective of their growing autonomy and utilizes new patterns of communicating
- opportunities to form positive peer relationships and support, especially through structured programs
- opportunities for caring relationships with adults who like and respect them; who share their own experiences, views, values, and feelings; and who serve as role models and advisors

### **Physical Activity**

- opportunities to utilize their energy and growing bodies through activities that require physical movement or expression

### **Meaningful Participation in Families, Schools, Churches, and Community Organizations**

- opportunities to participate in making decisions about activities that shape their lives and as active leaders or participants who can make a viable contribution to the success of those activities
- opportunities to participate as valued members of the faith community and as leaders in church ministries and programs
- opportunities for exposure to situations in which they can use their skills to solve real-life problems and affect the world around them, such as community service programs

### **Creative Expression**

- opportunities to express to the external world who they are on the inside (feelings, interests, abilities, thoughts) through a variety of activities, such as music, writing, sports, art, drama, cooking, and so on.
- activities that enable them to experience and test out new and different forms of self-expression

### **Personal Religious Experience**

- opportunities to explore the big questions in life, questions whose answers can be comprehended only within the context of faith and religion
- opportunities for a deeper and more personal relationship with God

### **Structure and Clear Limits**

- provision of structure and guidance that assists young adolescents in making decisions about their behavior and that involves them in the decision-making process itself
- provision of structure that helps young people stay focused on a task, persevere in their various efforts and succeed—leading to an increase in self-esteem
- provision of structure and clear limits that help young adolescents feel safe in their activities—empowering them to live with joy and confidence

(The material on this handout is from *YouthWorks* [Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1994], section 2, pages 21 and 7–8. Copyright © 1994 by the Center for Ministry Development.)

# Understanding Youth Today: Older Adolescents

## **The Changes in Older Adolescents (Ages 15 to 19, Grades 10 to 12)**

### **Intellectual Development**

- developing the ability to engage in reflecting thinking ("What do I think?" "Why do I think that?") that makes it possible to develop a personal identity, personal value system, and personal faith
- thinking about and planning for the future

### **Identity Development**

- beginning the process of establishing a personal identity, which includes an acceptance of one's sexuality, decision-making regarding the future, and a commitment to a personally-held system of values and religious beliefs
- shifting from the authority of family to self-chosen authority (oneself), often by establishing an identity that is shaped by significant others (peers and adults)
- experiencing a period of questioning, re-evaluation, and experimentation
- developing greater autonomy in making personal decisions, assuming responsibility for oneself, and regulating one's own behavior

### **Moral Development**

- exercising moral judgments in matters of much greater complexity as they seek to establish a more personal form of moral reasoning
- re-evaluating the moral values received from family, church, and significant others
- searching for a moral code that preserves their personal integrity and provides the basis for developing an internalized moral value system that can guide their behavior

### **Interpersonal Development**

- moving toward greater personal intimacy and adult sexuality
- developing the capability for more mutual, trusting, deep, and enduring personal friendships with members of the same sex and the opposite sex who provide acceptance, love, affirmation, and the opportunity to honestly share their deepest selves
- expanding their social perspective to encompass the larger world

### **Faith Development**

- exploring and questioning the faith handed down by family and church as they search for a style of faith and belief that is more personal to oneself
- beginning the process of taking responsibility for one's own faith life, commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes
- exploring a personal relationship with God who knows, accepts, and affirms them, and with Jesus Christ through his teaching, example, and presence in one's life

### **Implications for Ministry, or Developmental Needs of Older Adolescents**

#### **Exploration and Experimentation**

- opportunities to experiment with a wide array of behaviors, roles, attitudes, relationships, ideas, and activities as they develop their personal identity and their faith identity
- opportunities to explore who they are and who they can become by reflecting on self in relation to others
- opportunities for youth of ethnic cultures to achieve a positive orientation toward their own culture and white American culture; to affirm their ethnicity through observation of ceremonies, retention of native language, and reinforcement of specific attitudes, beliefs, and practices

#### **Adult Sexuality**

- opportunities to understand their sexual growth and integrate their sexuality into their own personality in a holistic way
- opportunities to develop healthy values and attitudes regarding their own sexuality

#### **Interpersonal Relationships**

- opportunities to form positive relationships and experiences with peers in a comfortable and secure environment and to develop friendship-making and friendship-maintaining skills
- opportunities to learn how to develop a relationship with parents that is reflective of their growing autonomy and that utilizes new patterns of communicating

#### **Adult Mentors**

- opportunities to develop relationships with adult Christians who affirm their journey and struggles, explore sensitive issues with them, listen to their stories and questions, share their own faith journey, and ask questions to encourage critical thinking and reflection

### **Meaningful Roles in the Community and Society**

- opportunities to participate with other older adolescents as full members and leaders in the community, the society, and the Church
- opportunities to explore, discuss, and act on local and global justice issues and to develop an active responsibility for what happens in their community and world, and to be involved in meaningful community service
- opportunities to be involved in the decision-making, planning, and implementation of programs that serve them

### **Preparing for the Future**

- opportunities to acquire the competencies necessary for adult roles, such as goal setting, problem solving, time management, and decision-making
- opportunities to explore life options and plan their futures (education, career) and to help them acquire the skills, knowledge, and experience for their chosen fields; to more closely link the worlds of school and work

### **Personal Value System and Decision-Making Skills**

- opportunities to discuss conflicting values and to formulate their own value system
- opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in making decisions and applying Christian moral values when making moral judgments

### **Personal Faith**

- opportunities to explore and question the faith they have been given by their family and the faith community, and to develop their own faith identity
- opportunities to explore what it means to be and live as a person of faith today
- opportunities to develop a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ

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# Understanding Youth Today: Generational Insights

## Insights on the Millennial Generation

They are the young navigators. They doubt that traditional institutions can provide them with the good life, and take personal responsibility for their lives. They do value material goods, but they are not self-absorbed. They are more knowledgeable than any previous generation, and they care deeply about social issues. They believe strongly in individual rights such as privacy and rights to information. But they have no ethos of individualism, thriving, rather, from close interpersonal networks and displaying a strong sense of social responsibility. (Don Tapscott, *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998], page 9. Copyright © 1998 by McGraw-Hill. All rights reserved. Used with permission.)

### Millennial Generation

Seekers

v.

Work the system

v.

Authority is relational

v.

Information is networked *web*

v.

### Previous Generations

Receivers

Figure out the system

Authority as position

Information is *linear*

## Implications

- Relationships are key.
- They want to influence their involvement.
- Living as adventure—they are interested in the *why* and the *who*, not just the *what*.
- They want to be taken seriously.

## What's a Millennial?

- The generation emerging at the end of one millennium and the beginning of another is called the *millennial generation*.
- A *millennial* is generally defined as a young person who was born during 1982 or after. The first millennials graduated in the high school class of 2000.
- Millennials tend to be optimistic, self-reliant, ambitious, and discriminating about the deluge of messages that engulf them.

- Millennials are called *neotraditionalists*. They may look extreme with their haircuts, fashions, and penchant for the fringe, but deep inside is a longing for ideals to believe in, a purpose to pursue, and a family or group of friends to accompany them.
- Millennials are more likely to be bored (57 percent) than angry (37 percent), depressed (24 percent), or lonely (23 percent).
- *Extreme* is a concept that seems to work when trying to describe this generation. A millennial may look like a wild nonconformist, but underneath the bleached hair and the body piercing is a heart that is likely to be passionate about God, country, and family.
- Millennials and Gen Xers share many common traits:
  - They are comfortable with contradictions.
  - They are highly relational.
  - They harbor feelings of abandonment.
  - They have a great interest in spirituality.
  - They endure massive exposure to media.
  - They seek comfort without having to sell out their values.
  - They highly value family.
  - They are confused regarding the purpose of life.
  - They accept change as a constant in life.
  - Technology is a natural part of their existence.

### Comparing Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials

<b>Boomers</b>	<b>Gen Xers</b>	<b>Millennials</b>
Prefer black-and-white moral values	Value a gray world—no absolutes	Comfortable with paradox—prefer black and white
Are idealistic	Are cynical	Are optimistic
Value people's words	Value people's actions	Value people (community)
Value what's right	Value what's real	Value teamwork
Make choices based on passion	Make choices based on what is real and practical	Make choices based on changing criteria
Focus on philosophies	Focus on results	Focus on social change
See conformity as unity	See diversity as unity	Consider conformity outdated
Value causes	Value relationships	Value productive relationships
Focus on the group	Focus on the individual	Focus on survival and success of self
Find meaning in abstract thought	Find meaning in what they can experience with their senses	Find meaning in controlling useful information
Live to work	Work to live	Live to know
Returned to faith when they became parents	Are "Spiritual Sensors"	Are "Spiritual Questers"

(This handout is excerpted from "Introduction: What's a Millennial?" in *The Seven Cries of Today's Teens: Hear Their Hearts, Make the Connection*, by Timothy Smith [Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2003], pages 17–18. Copyright © 2003 by Timothy Smith. All rights reserved. Used with permission.)

# Sharing Faith with Youth

Jesus spent hours with a small group of people most of his life, nurturing them, disciplining them, being a faith companion. As we reach out to the young as friends, as companions on the journey, we are in a unique position to share our faith and our doubts, and to help our young people reflect upon these for themselves. Here are several helpful hints for creating faith conversations:

- Make an effort to find out what has gone on at the school or in the community that might have an impact on those youth with whom you have some contact.
- Remember names! Write them down if it helps.
- Seek out and focus on a few young people that you will attempt to get to know better.
- Once you have begun to develop a greater degree of trust, don't be afraid to ask young people some challenging, thought-provoking questions that require a response from both the mind and the heart. A few examples:
  - What do you value? What is most important to you?
  - Describe your ideal vacation, job, date, school, family, friend, and so on.
  - Who is the most important person to you? Why?
  - From where does your primary source of strength and support come?
  - What does it mean to be a Christian? a Catholic?
  - What is or what are your image(s) of God? Jesus? Why? Who is Jesus to you?
  - What is faith? love? happiness?
  - What does "community" mean to you?
  - How do we know there is a God or that Jesus was who he said he was?
  - What does attending Mass mean to you?
  - If you had one sentence in which to state the message of Jesus, what would you say?
  - What is prayer? What helps you to focus upon God?
  - How do you slow down, handle stress, "go into the garden"?

(The material on this handout is from *Youth Evangelization: A Youth Ministry Resource Manual*, by Mary Merkle-Scotland and Reynolds R. Ekstrom [New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1994], page 17. Copyright © 1994 by Don Bosco Multimedia.)

# Leading a Small Group

- Familiarize yourself with the session so that you will be better prepared to give directions and process activities.
- Prepare and organize your supplies.
- Participate with the young people in all games, prayers, and discussions.
- Lead, encourage, affirm, support, and befriend the participants.
- Help the participants feel welcome and comfortable.
- Help each person in the group get to know the others better.
- Be aware of the shy persons (who need more encouragement) and the rowdy ones (who need some calming down). Learn about the young peoples' lives outside your meeting or class so that you can better understand what they are dealing with in school and at home.
- Help the participants keep to a given topic, and guide the discussion.
- Never tell the participants what they have learned. Instead, draw the answers from their sharing.
- Contribute to, but do not dominate, the discussion. Do not feel as though you have to fill in any quiet gaps.
- If you have trouble getting a discussion started, vary how you decide who will begin the sharing. For example, start with the person who has the most letters on his or her shirt, has the next birthday, has the longest name, has the highest house number in his or her street address, and so on.
- Ask open-ended questions:
  - How do you feel?
  - What is your reaction?
  - What do you think?
  - What would you do in this situation?
  - What would Jesus do?
- Make sure everyone is included, that everyone participates and has a chance to voice their opinion. Stress that each person's contribution is valuable.
- Do a lot of listening.
- Thank each person for participating.
- Share your own story of faith with the young people.
- Remember to pray and to have fun!

(The material on this handout is from *ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes*, by Maryann Hakowski [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1999], pages 102–103. Copyright © 1999 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

# Serving as a Chaperone

## **Chaperoning young people is a sacred trust.**

- The best chaperones are those adults who enjoy spending time with young people while maintaining their role as adults.
- When you are serving as a chaperone, drinking alcoholic beverages is inappropriate and may impair your ability to be alert.
- Rules and guidelines for behavior are for the good of all participants. Do not change the rules (curfew, check-in, leaving the grounds, and so on) without speaking to the youth ministry coordinator or adult in charge.

## **Model the behavior that is expected of young people.**

- Be respectful and courteous to each person you meet. Using put-downs or making fun of another person is disrespectful and hurtful.
- Refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages when in the presence of young people. Youth need to know that having a good time is possible without alcohol.
- Refrain from smoking when you are with young people. If you do smoke, do it away from the young people, to avoid encouraging an unhealthy habit.
- Treat all young people the same. Playing favorites or exempting certain youth from the rules causes division in the community.
- Refrain from using profanity, and discourage everyone from using it.

## **Mingle with young people, and get to know them.**

- Learn the names of the young people, and then call them by name.
- Mix among the young people—at meals, on the bus, in the auditorium, wherever there is an opportunity. Resist the temptation to hang out with other chaperones.
- Enjoy spending time with youth, and have fun. Young people need to experience adults as friendly, approachable, and caring.

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# Serving as a Driver

## **Your Vehicle**

- ☐ Check tire air pressure as well as oil and other fluid levels.
- ☐ Check all seat belts and make sure they are in working order.
- ☐ Test turn signals and headlights (low and high beam).
- ☐ Test windshield wipers; fill windshield water reservoir.
- ☐ Start each trip with a full tank of gas.
- ☐ Keep an automobile emergency kit in the car, including flares, first-aid kit, and flashlight.
- ☐ Maintain automobile insurance coverage in compliance with diocesan policy.

## **Your Role as Driver**

- Maintain good driving habits at all times, whether transporting young people or not. This includes, but is not limited to, wearing a seat belt, obeying traffic signs, refraining from talking on a cell phone—or at least using an earpiece when doing so—and from eating meals or engaging in other distracting behavior (shaving, putting on make-up, reading a newspaper) while driving.
- Start the trip well-rested and prepared.
- Provide guidelines for acceptable behavior, for example, keeping arms and legs inside the car, keeping the radio or CD player at a reasonable sound level, remaining seated during the trip with seat belts fastened.
- Use the trip for conversations with young people.
- Be sure to have all pertinent trip information and supplies: directions and map; trip schedule, including location of planned stops or breaks for meals or rest; emergency phone numbers, including cell phone of the leader; money for bridge tolls; signed consent-to-treat forms for young people in the car (check with diocesan policy); and so on.

# Giving a Presentation

## Preparation

- Spend time thinking and praying about what you want to say. What are the outcomes or goals of the presentation?
- Consult appropriate resources in developing your presentation.
- Outline your presentation. A typical format includes the following components:
  - *Opening*. Offer a brief prayer; introduce the topic by leading an activity that connects to the topic, by telling a story, or by using your own creative method.
  - *Content*. Let the audience know what you will do in the presentation; consider a variety of methods to share the content of your message with the audience, such as statistics, stories, movies or song clips, lecture, group activity, or discussion and reflection.
  - *Summarize*. In a few sentences, tell the participants what they just heard or experienced; ask them to offer a summary of what they heard or learned.
  - *Final thought(s)*. Offer a final thought for the participants to ponder as they leave, provide an idea for a next step on the topic, or challenge the participants to do something with what they just learned. Close with prayer.
- Assemble the materials and supplies you need. This may include handouts, a TV, a VCR or DVD player, a CD player, newsprint, markers, or other props.
- Practice your presentation. Listen to yourself aloud or give your presentation to another person. Ask for honest feedback. Check the timing for each part of the presentation. Fine-tune any pieces of the presentation that need a bit more work.

## Delivery

- Speak loud enough for participants to hear you clearly and comfortably. Pay attention to the tone of your voice and your body language. A friendly tone of voice and a relaxed (but not sloppy) posture conveys warmth and openness to the group.
- Smile and relax; your audience will relax with you! Maintain eye contact with the participants throughout your presentation.

- If group process is part of your presentation, use language that invites the audience to participate. Use "I invite you to . . ." rather than "I want you to . . ." Be sure your directions are clear; restate them so the participants are clear on what to do.
- Use language that is accessible to all; for example, do not use highly technical or jargon-laden words when simpler words can convey the meaning of your message.
- Avoid using excessive emotionalism to stir the participants. Refrain from stories or anecdotes that unnecessarily evoke strong emotions from the participants. If conversion is a hoped-for outcome of your presentation, let the Holy Spirit do the work!
- If a question-and-answer period is part of the presentation, be truthful in your responses. If you do not know the answer, say so. Offer to find out the answer and get back to the person, or suggest another person or resource that may answer the question.

### **Evaluation**

- Did you identify with the participants? Were you able to connect with them through a personal story or while in dialogue with them?
- Were you comfortable with your presentation? Did you rely too heavily on your notes?
- Were you able to stay within the allotted time frame for your presentation? What changes would you make if you were asked to give the presentation again?

# Leading an Icebreaker or a Community Builder

## **Preparation**

- Review the instructions for the icebreaker or community builder. Be sure you understand the process of the activity.
- Practice leading the activity with a small group. Make adjustments as necessary.
- Use activities that involve everyone, at least in the beginning of the activity. Pay attention to the needs of the group. Do not use activities that might exclude someone because of physical limitations.
- Gather the props and supplies you may need for the activities.

## **Method**

- Face the group, and smile (it helps you relax). Get the group's attention. Begin when everyone is quiet and looking at you.
- Be enthusiastic. The participants will take their cue from you; if you are excited and animated, they will look forward to the activity.
- Give directions on how the activity is to be done. Be clear and precise. Before beginning the activity, ask whether anyone has any questions about what they are to do. Be sure everyone has the necessary supplies for the activity.
- Pay attention to the experience of the group. Comment on the humorous situations.
- Stop the activity before the participants get bored or run out of steam.
- Make the connection between the activity and what comes next. Let the group know why this activity was done and how it helps move the group to the next step.
- Ask the participants to talk about their experience with the activity. What did they learn from it? What made the activity fun? Why do they think you chose this particular activity?

## Evaluation

- Was everyone involved? Were there periods of waiting to participate? Did the nature of the activity make that okay?
- How did the participants respond to the activity? Did they enjoy it? Were they bored? Did the activity get out of control? What can you do to prevent that next time?
- Was the activity on target in terms of on length? Was it played too long? too short?
- Did the activity do what you intended it to do? Did it lead into the next activity or talk? If the intent was to help participants get to know one another better, did the activity accomplish its purpose?
- If you were to do this activity again, how would you improve your leadership? How would you improve the activity?

## Resource Suggestions

McLaughlin, Dennis R. and Michelle Anthony, eds. *The Gigantic Book of Games for Youth Ministry*, vol. 2. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Rydberg, Denny. *Building Community in Youth Groups*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 1985.

Ukens, Lorraine L. *All Together Now! A Seriously Fun Collection of Interactive Training Games and Activities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1999.

# Leading Prayer with Adolescents

Leading prayer with young people includes three components: being a person of prayer, being skillful in preparing prayer, and making prayer central to your ministry with young people.

## Being a Person of Prayer

- **Jesus is our model for prayer.** Jesus lived a life that included private prayer, opportunities for sharing the Good News, constant talk about the Father, and ritual. Make use of all the types and styles of prayer!
- **Examine your own prayer life.** To be a credible leader of prayer or a witness to the faith, be a person of prayer. Keep challenging yourself in your understanding and growth regarding prayer.
- **Pray always.** Remember the common, everyday moments for prayer. Help others see that prayer is not just a formal exercise but is also utterances, conversations, quiet moments, and ritual.
- **Experiment! Pray all ways.** There are a variety of ways to pray, and all are good. Do not limit your prayer life or that of young people by narrowing the "acceptable" ways to pray. On the other hand, make sure you share with young people the ways you connect with God so that they can learn from your wisdom.
- **Make communal prayer interactive and experiential.** Invite the young people to respond through song, responses, and ritual action so that they are not spectators. Actively engage the young people in the experience of prayer.
- **Connect with the Scriptures.** Introduce the young people to the rich stories of our faith. Include the Scriptures in prayer whenever possible. Include Scripture passages on awards, certificates, bulletin boards, and program titles. Scripture stories can be told in many ways, so be creative!
- **Use prayer to celebrate life moments and events.** Birthdays, graduations, driving privileges, school plays, world news, and national concerns are all moments for prayer. Include in prayer the concerns of young people.
- **Model ways of leading prayer.** Become comfortable as a prayer leader. Learn how to preside at prayer and how to pray spontaneously. Leading grace, opening a meeting with prayer, and presiding at a communal prayer service or a communion service are ways you can model for young people how to lead prayer with and for others. Learn and practice the skills of leading prayer so that you can teach others.

- **Prayer is not an option.** Prayer is as essential to our life and ministry as is breathing.

### Skills for Preparing Prayer

- Pay attention to the context of the prayer. What is happening in the lives of the young people? How can prayer be connected to the gathering, event, activity, or meeting?
- Prepare, then plan. Begin with the focus for prayer, then uncover resources and begin to plan.
- Use a variety of contemporary music and songs.
- Use a variety of prayer styles, including traditional, composed, and spontaneous.
- Follow a pattern of movement. The four movements of prayer are:
  - **Gather.** Become aware of the presence of God.
  - **Listen.** How is God active and present in our lives today?
  - **Respond.** How will we keep God's word alive in our hearts and lives?
  - **Send forth.** Go out with a renewed sense of mission to live the Gospel.

### Making Prayer Central to Our Ministry

- Overcome your fear of praying in public.
  - Pray aloud when you pray alone.
  - Pray with a small group of adults on a regular basis.
  - Start small. Lead a meal blessing or other simple prayer to gain confidence.
  - Pray even when you are afraid.
  - Do not worry about praying like others. Be yourself.
- Build a prayer support team.
  - Ask people to support youth ministry through prayer. Let the young people know that people in the parish are praying for them. Ask this group to mentor other young people who wish to grow in their prayer life.
- Never miss an opportunity to pray with a young person.
  - If a young person brings a problem to your attention, either over the phone or in person, offer to pray with him or her right then.
- Pray for others with youth.
  - Visit parishioners who are in the hospital or nursing home or who are homebound; pray with and for the person(s) you are visiting.

- Tell the young people what God is doing in your life.
  - Let them know . . .
    - the people you are praying for
    - the answers to your prayers
    - how you are praying to know God's will
    - prayers that seem unanswered so far
  - Share with them how you pray . . .
    - at Sunday (and weekday) liturgy
    - through reading the Bible
    - with friends and family
    - during moments of silence
    - by taking time each day
    - and whatever other disciplines are part of your prayer life

(The material on this handout is adapted from *Empowering Adults Institute*, by the Center for Ministry Development [Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 2002], pages 79–82, 85–86, and 93–94. Copyright © 2002 by the Center for Ministry Development.)

# Relating to Youth

I think something about our youth minister that really helps is that he is almost like a friend to us. He'll talk to you, and he makes you feel comfortable, and he's nice to everyone, and he'll act like he has known them forever. He always remembers your name. He is sort of like a friend, and you really feel like you can laugh and talk with him. He makes you feel comfortable. (From a teenager at the National Symposium on Effective Youth Ministry Practices in Catholic Parishes, 2003)

When you are in a relationship with youth, put your best foot forward—remember to be . . .

- **Respectful** of who they are already, and who they are in the process of becoming. Be open to sharing in their journey, and be patient and respectful of their questions, concerns, and "not there yet-ness." Be sensitive to their cultural customs and needs, recognizing that they live in a different world than the one in which you grew up. Know and call them by name!
- **Appreciative.** Honor the gift that adolescents are to our Church, and recognize how our Church needs the gift of adolescents. Acknowledge and celebrate each young person's uniqueness, without playing favorites! Affirm the gifts you see, accept the young people as they are, and help them recognize their giftedness.
- **Compassionate.** Strive to understand what is going on in the life of a young person—the issues, interests, concerns, and challenges that are in that young person's life. Extend an open, welcoming stance toward the young person and show empathy.
- **Aware.** Seek to know what is happening in their life and what their needs are. The rate of growth and change during adolescence is only greater during the first two years of life. Adolescents will develop at very different rates, so we must be aware of the physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual dimensions within each youth. No two young people will develop at the same rate.
- **Authentic.** Be who you are, be honest, be real. Young people can spot a fake a mile away. Know your own biases, prejudices, and agendas. If you think that pierced noses are a sign of stupidity, do not be surprised that the young person with the pierced nose doesn't trust you.

- **Patient.** Young people are "not done yet," but then again, neither are you! Acknowledge your limitations and imperfections, and learn to be comfortable saying "I don't know," "I was wrong," and "I am sorry." Encourage young people to do the same. Recognize that conversion is a lifelong process and that learning is a lifelong endeavor.
- **Present.** The best way to know and be known by young people is to spend time with them. An investment of our time and attention is essential. Appreciate that any time we have with young people is a gift. Learn and use good listening skills. Go to their games and plays, and say hi to them when you see them at work.
- **An Adult.** There is a distinction between being an adult friend and being a peer friend. Be an adult friend! Act your own age, whatever it is. Set boundaries and have clear expectations. Be respectful of young people's culture and costumes, but be respectful of your own as well. You do not need to dress, talk, or act like adolescents to be important to them. Be consistent in the area of discipline. Most young people respond best to adults who have clear expectations for behavior. When disciplining, disapprove of actions, not the person. Establish reasonable expectations based on the reality of the current situation and individuality of the young person involved.
- **A Representative of the Faith Community.** You are the Church to the young people of your parish! They look to you to find out what it means to be a responsible, faith-filled adult—you are their model. Remember that who you are and how you interact with young people has far greater impact than what you say.

### Resource Suggestion

Kimball-Baker, Kathleen. *Tag, You're It! 50 Easy Ways to Connect with Young People*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 2003.

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