

**Parent and Young Adolescent Connection**

**SPEAKING HEART - TO - HEART**

Second Edition, 1993

developed by

Evelyn Rooks-Weir, CFLE, Associate Professor - Extension Human Development Specialist  
Alden Hilliker, Ph.D., Associate Professor - Extension 4-H Youth Specialist

of

The Florida Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences  
University of Florida  
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## INTRODUCTION

The anxiety of parents increases when children approach their adolescent years. Changes in the emotional, physiological, physical, and cognitive development of younger children seem mild in comparison with the tumultuous ups and downs of adolescence and its surrounding culture.

The Parent And Young Adolescent Connection, Speaking Heart-To-Heart curriculum was developed to help parents and young adolescents gain knowledge and develop skills to cope with misunderstandings and conflicts that will normally occur during this stage of the family life cycle. The goal of this program is to maintain and perhaps enhance the positive qualities of families with young adolescents.

Characteristics of strong families have been identified by the world-wide research of Dr. Nick Stinnett and others. They found that strong families:

- spend time together
- communicate in an open and balanced manner;
- express appreciation to each other often;
- share spiritual beliefs and values
- cope with crises in positive ways;
- have a strong commitment to their family unit.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing limitations of any interpersonal relations among family members have assembled some content that will help you and your young adolescent talking with each other in a more open way with each other; appreciation what each other; understanding the position that each has in the scheme of life; and examining common goals. Although this is a process as well as a product, this process, we believe that you will find it worth you have put forth. After all, families are the majority of people in our society.

1. Stinnett, Nick and John DeFrain. **Families**. New York: Berkley Books.

## PROGRAM FACILITATOR INFORMATION

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Parent And Young Adolescent Connection, Speaking Heart-To-Heart curriculum is to enhance the qualities of strong families among those families with at least one member in the ten-through-fourteen age range. As young adolescents enter the phase of their life when noted physiological, physical, social, and emotional changes are occurring, there is often accompanying conflict and dissatisfaction with relations among family members. In most normal families, this situation can be alleviated with some knowledge about what is happening to both the adolescent and the parent at this time, and with the development of some communication skills. This curriculum is designed to provide this knowledge and skill to family members.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this curriculum are to: (1) increase positive, facilitative, and balanced communication; (2) increase clarification and application of shared beliefs and values; (3) improve skills to cope with problems, stress, and crisis situations; (4) increase time for and commitment to achievement of family goals; and (5) increase ability and commitment to expression of appreciation among family members.

### **Program Implementation Strategies**

Conducting the Activity. The information needed to conduct the sessions is included in the curriculum. The authors have tried to present this in a usable format. However, because every individual has a different perspective and different expertise, it is recommended that you study the curriculum thoroughly before you even decide to conduct the activity. You may decide to do some things differently and this might affect your planning. References suggested for this background reading will be helpful to you. They may be found in your local library, bookstores, or if you are unable to find them in your local community, then contact your human development specialist, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, 3041 McCarty Hall, Gainesville, Florida 32611-0310.

The curriculum includes some require certain materials such as pencil markers, etc. Because these will need session begins, you will want to know plan to purchase or have donated to you materials are indicated for each session.

A nutritious snack is an excellent socializing among participants. This is recommended.

Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. When Extension faculty member that there is to conduct a Speaking Heart-To-Heart recommended that an ad hoc advisory assist with this project. The overall 4-Advisory Committee would have previous decision to conduct the program, and representation on the ad hoc committee members might include public school representatives, church leaders from the activity is to be conducted, business representatives young adolescents. You may, of course wish to have on your committee. It is committee membership be kept to a minimum of eight people.

Facilitators. The curriculum is designed This is so that at certain times during you may work with adults and another with your co-facilitator is extremely important someone with whom you feel comfortable. Facilitators need to have some group leadership feelings toward people. It is recommended facilitator be an Extension faculty member invited to present information on a certain arrangement agreed upon by both facilitators among mental health professionals, church personnel, or lay people who have expertise in such work.

**Date, Time and Place Selection.** Establish the dates, times and place of your activity at least eight weeks prior to your first session so that you will be able to carry out adequate publicity. Your ad hoc advisory committee will be able to advise you regarding an appropriate time and place for your sessions. There are usually some advantages and disadvantages to any time and place that you choose. To make your selection in an objective manner, you may wish to list advantages and disadvantages of each suggested date and location to see which has the most advantages. Selection of the site for your activity is important. A pleasant room that is carpeted and has soft lighting is ideal. You may have to use a classroom-type setting. Try to find a room that has movable furniture. This will allow participants to sit so that everyone can see everyone else. At times you will need to have two groups so two rooms may be a better arrangement. At other times, you will want the group divided into more family-sized groups. This may require additional furniture rearrangement.

While field-testing this curriculum, four sessions conducted over a two-week span of time seemed to work best. You may find that in your particular situation, another arrangement is better. Options to consider include one session per week, or an all-day workshop and overnight lock-in. In certain circumstances, once-a-month meetings might be appropriate. For example, a parent-teacher organization might conduct the program at a series of their meetings. Each session is planned to be two hours long. This may need to be adapted in your particular situation.

In the field testing of this project, a follow-up activity was planned by the participants. The event was suggested in the curriculum and was found to be extremely successful. This event is intended to provide an opportunity for the participants to practice goal-setting skills and carry out plans for a specific family outing of some sort. Leaders are reminded that this decision must be left to the participants if it is to achieve its goal.

**Recruitment.** Recruiting an audience for Speaking Heart-To-Heart will depend upon the need for such a program in your community and the recognition of this need by families. A series of media presentations may help develop awareness in your community. Appropriate targeting for this activity can also help. To assist you with your media campaign news releases and radio spots are

included in the curriculum. If you have publicity, then you will surely want to use a mass media as well. Your ad hoc advisor will be able to advise you regarding an appropriate time and place for your sessions. There are usually some advantages and disadvantages to any time and place that you choose. To make your selection in an objective manner, you may wish to list advantages and disadvantages of each suggested date and location to see which has the most advantages. Selection of the site for your activity is important. A pleasant room that is carpeted and has soft lighting is ideal. You may have to use a classroom-type setting. Try to find a room that has movable furniture. This will allow participants to sit so that everyone can see everyone else. At times you will need to have two groups so two rooms may be a better arrangement. At other times, you will want the group divided into more family-sized groups. This may require additional furniture rearrangement.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation of your program can be done in many different ways. First, it can help you decide whether to repeat the program, and if so, what changes to be made when it is repeated. Second, your supervisors recognize the effectiveness of your program. They provide you data to report to funding sources. Commissioners so they can know of the program having in your county.

Evaluation can take many different forms. One way is to collect data about the impact of your program by administering a questionnaire. An evaluation form that was specifically designed for your program is available from the Program Evaluation and Organization Cooperative Extension Service. Before changes in knowledge and behavior, it is important to measure them before the first session begins, and again after the program.

**Reporting Results** After data are collected from your program and a report is developed, it should be distributed to a number of persons. It is suggested that the report be distributed to your supervisors, your county commissioner, your State 4-H Office, county committee members, and community members. You may also write a newspaper article on your activity at a professional level. A paper describing your activity and its impact can be submitted to the Extension Review or Journal of Extension. Give your report to your local media.