

All parents are interested in who their kids hang out with and date. Chances are, they won't always like the choices their kids make when it comes to friend groups or dating partners. But how they respond to those situations can be a delicate process. In this meeting, you'll give them some pointers on the best practices for handling the bad influences in the lives of their kids.

SET UP

- Set the tables up by age groups or grade. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to have one grade per table (an 8th-grade table), or combined grades (a 7–8th-grade table) or split into two groups (a junior high table and high school table). This way, all the parents sit next to parents who have kids about the same age. It's a good idea for them to get to know and learn from each other as they naturally discuss parenting successes and failures.
- Have a calendar with all the youth events for the semester on the table in front of each seat. We've provided several different editable templates for calendars in the "Intentional Programing" folder. Turning this calendar into a magnet they can keep on the fridge is a big win if you have the budget. A piece of paper will get lost or thrown away, but a magnet or even postcard-sized card stock that they can post on the fridge will get kept and seen often.
- If you are doing this on a Sunday morning, provide doughnuts and milk or other breakfast food and drinks at each table. If you are doing this after the Sunday morning service, make sure lunch is ready as soon as the service is over. The last thing you want is a group of hungry parents waiting around to be fed!

WELCOME

- Stand at the door and greet each parent as they walk into the room. This ensures you have at least one personal interaction with everyone at the meeting.
- To start the meeting, welcome the group and draw their attention to the calendar. Give them a few minutes to look it over and ask any questions they may have about the upcoming events.

GAME

- Play one of the games your students love to play. You can pick from the Game Library we provide or choose a simple ice breaker game each table can play. It's always good to incorporate some fun into a meeting. Plus, if you pick a game that you regularly play with your students, the parents have more insight into the youth ministry and what their kids do there.

MEETING

- Transition from the game/ice breaker: introduce the topic and walk through the talking points.

TALKING POINTS

- ALLOW YOUR TEENAGER TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES THAT A PERSON IS A BAD INFLUENCE
 - If you forbid your kids from hanging out with or dating another person, you will likely drive them closer together rather than further apart.
 - Make them aware of the poor choices you've seen them and their friends make and the consequences that can occur because of those choices.
 - If you make negative comments, make sure it is about the other teenager's *behavior* and not the person. *I don't like the way Josh talks to adults* instead of *I don't like Josh*.
- REMIND YOUR TEENAGER WHAT A GOOD FRIEND LOOKS LIKE
 - Talk about qualities that they should look for in friends and qualities they should have themselves to be a good friend.
 - Instead of saying *I don't like you hanging out with Josh*, say something like *I've noticed Josh often criticizing and putting you down. You know a good friend is more encouraging than insulting*.
- SET STRICTER BOUNDARIES
 - Instead of saying your kids can't hang out with someone else, limit how they can hang out—only at your house or in very public places, raise their curfew so they have less time together. If for no other reason but to have more freedom, your teen may choose different people to hang out with.
- ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS
 - You've taught your kids the difference between right and wrong, so they will feel conviction when they cross lines they know they shouldn't (Prov. 22:6).
 - Ask why they like spending time with the person. Make them be specific.
 - While teenagers aren't the most talkative group regarding their emotions, just asking the questions now will cause them to think when they are in the circumstances they know they shouldn't be in.
- PRAY FOR GODLY FRIENDS
 - We were created for a community that pushes us closer to God (Gen. 2:18). Ask God to send godly friends and boyfriends/girlfriends into your kids' lives.
 - Prayer is a powerful weapon that should not go unemployed.

CLOSING

- Give a few minutes for any follow-up questions. Tell them you'll hang around after if there are any questions they want to discuss separately.
- Pray for them and their families.
- Thank them for coming and dismiss the meeting.

