

A Student/Parent Mini-Conference

Based on

StUPiD
Parents

and

Not-SO-StUPiD
Parents

By Hayley DiMarco

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Introduction

How many of your students have ever complained about their parents? Have you ever heard one of them exclaim, “My parents are so stupid”? Sure you have. We all have. These remarks come from parents, too. “I don’t understand what my son is thinking.” “Does my daughter act out just to make me mad?” The truth is that when it comes to communication, both parents and kids can sometimes be clueless.

This mini-conference will help. Because I want to include kids *and* their parents, I’ve designed this with both large-group activities as well as breakout sessions. Depending on the number of attendees, you may want to break the participants into more than one parent group and more than one teen group. If you have a small gathering, however, one group of each will suffice. You’ll want to recruit at least one discussion leader for each of these breakout groups, too.

This mini-conference is based on my books *Stupid Parents* (for teens) and *Not-So-Stupid Parents* (for adults), and largely reflects on the content in each book. Because there won’t be time to read during the event, I suggest handing out copies of the books two weeks before the event so everyone has time to familiarize themselves with the content. The event, itself, will last approximately 6 hours. I’ve offered a suggested timetable in the overview, but feel free to adapt this schedule as needed. Be flexible and remember that the goal is to have meaningful discussion—not to simply “get through” the schedule.

You may also want to think about offering a take-away item for the participants—something that will help parents and students remember this event. The Closing Session of this guide provides suggestion for the items to use. Add these take-away items to your supply list, and be sure to buy one for each family that will be attending.

It’s almost time to get started. But first, here are some helpful hints about using this guide and preparing for the event.

Before You Start

Pick A Location

Since this mini-conference includes large-group time, as well as breakout sessions, you’ll want to choose a location that has at least three rooms: one room large enough to host your entire group, and two smaller rooms for the breakout sessions. (*Note: If necessary, you can do the mini-conference with only two rooms and allow the large-group space to double as a room for one of the breakout sessions.*) Of course, if you’re planning on more than two breakout groups, you’ll need to plan your space accordingly.

Equip Yourself

Make sure you've read through *Stupid Parents*, *Not-So-Stupid Parents*, and this entire event guide before the event. As you read, jot down ideas that will help you make the activities and questions applicable to your group. You may also want to think of some personal stories you can share. And set aside a special prayer time to ask for God's blessing on this event. Pray for the families who will be coming. Ask God to give you wisdom and grace as you encourage both students and parents to improve their relationships at home.

Recruit Help

Because this conference involves breakout sessions for both students and parents, you will need some help. You may lead one of these groups, but you'll want to recruit at least one other leader for the other group. If you have more than one parent group and more than one student group, keep that in mind so you can recruit enough leaders. Consider asking your senior pastor or one of the adult leaders who volunteers with your youth program. Give them a copy of this event guide, a copy of *Stupid Parents* or *Not-So-Stupid Parents* (depending on which kind of group they'll be leading) and highlight the sessions/discussions they will be leading.

Prepare for the Event

Supplies

This event includes several activity suggestions that require special supplies, so before the event you'll want to get your supplies in order. Read through the event guide and note the items you will need to have on hand. These are highlighted for you at the beginning of each activity, but in addition to those, you may also want to provide some paper and a pen for each person so they have a place to jot notes throughout the day.

The handouts are also important. Make sure you have enough copies of each, including the following:

- ___ Discussion Guides: While it's not necessary, you may want to make copies of the breakout session discussion guides for each participant.
- ___ Event Schedule: Print one copy for each participant
- ___ Event Guide: If you have volunteer leaders who will be assisting with the event, give them a copy of the event guide as well, highlighting any discussions or activities that they'll be leading.
- ___ "Studying Your Playbook" handouts for the Session Two breakouts
- ___ "Pep Talk" handouts for the Lunch Break Assignment
- ___ "Going for the Win" handouts for the Session Three activity

Food

This event has been designed to start in the morning and run into early afternoon. To keep people energized and focused, you might consider having some food and beverages available to pick up dur-

ing breaks. For breakfast, consider simple foods that are easy to prepare, like fruits, muffins, cinnamon rolls, donuts, or mini-quiches. Also have juice, coffee, and water on hand throughout the morning. For lunch, the attendees will have a special assignment so don't worry about providing food for that. If you need a break early afternoon, make sure you have snack items available. Chips, cookies, and brownies always go over well, but don't forget the healthy options like fruit and veggies. And you'll need utensils so collect enough plates, napkins, cups, and plastic silverware to go around.

Set-up

When you get to the day of the event, arrive early to get the room set up. Arrange the room so that there are several tables with 6–8 chairs surrounding each. Make table markers labeled “Parents” and “Students” and set them on each table, keeping in mind that you will likely have more parents’ tables than students’ tables. Place pens, paper, and copies of the opening activity in the center of each table. As people arrive, invite them to sit at the appropriate table.

Set up the food items in an easily-accessible area, including plates, napkins, silverware, and cups. Don't forget to start the coffee and set juice out as well.

Finally, double-check that all your supplies are close at hand. Place handouts on a table near the door of your room, so people can easily grab them when they go to their breakout sessions.

Get ready for Discussion

The questions I have included are meant as guidelines to help you keep your discussion moving. Here are a few more ideas to keep in mind:

- » **Prepare.** Make sure you've read through the book and the event guide beforehand. As you prepare for the conference, consider ways to make the questions more specific to your group. You may also find it helpful to think about one or two personal anecdotes you could share during group discussion.
- » **Be yourself.** Thank students and parents for sharing their thoughts and opinions, but don't feel that you need to agree with everyone. Be honest about your own thoughts and the lessons you've learned. Your opinion may not always be popular, but your honesty will earn respect—and maybe even push others to think about the issue from a different angle.
- » **Encourage deeper responses.** When someone gives a simple response, ask them follow-up questions like “Why do you feel that way?” “What do you mean when you say _____?” “Tell us more.”
- » **Allow for silence.** Remember: Your conference participants haven't read the questions ahead of time and they may need some time to process a response. Allow for about 7–10 seconds of silence before saying anything further, even when it makes you feel uncomfortable. If necessary, you can reword the question or move on to another topic.
- » **Draw everyone into the discussion.** If it seems like the same two or three people are responding to all your questions, look for ways to bring others into the conversation. Some people may need a little encouragement to share their thoughts and opinions. So invite them to talk by saying something like “Lisa, I'm curious what you think about this” or “Alex, I'd love to hear what you have to say about that.”

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- » **Be a good listener.** The goal is to have a true discussion, not a lecture from the group leader. Avoid putting words in others' mouths or overreacting to comments that you may not agree with. Try asking "mirror" questions that challenge people to clarify or affirm what you've heard. For example, say "What I hear you saying is this. Is that what you mean?" or "So what you seem to be saying is this. Would you agree?"
- » **Bring God into it.** Ask God to direct your discussion and be open to the Spirit's leading: It may be that he takes you in an unexpected direction, so don't get too hung up on "the plan."

Welcome

Greeting

Once everyone is seated, welcome them to the event, and open with a word of prayer. Then give a brief talk based on the following points:

- » Remind everyone that, although it doesn't always feel like it, parents and students share the same ultimate goal: A peaceful home where they feel affirmed and loved.
- » Share the football team analogy: A parent's role is like that of a coach, while their teen's role is similar to the players'. Like a coach, the parent needs to be the authority figure and help their "players" develop skills for the game—in this case, the game of life. And, like players, the teens need to respect the authority of their "coach" and cooperate with the coach's decisions. It takes healthy communication to help both parties achieve the "touchdown" of a peaceful home life.
- » Sympathize with those families who feel like their home is in chaos, and affirm those who feel like they already enjoy a good parent/teen relationship. Share your hopes that this event will help everyone—from the most desperate to the most put together—to communicate better and become a more effective "team."
- » Remind everyone to keep these goals in mind throughout the day. Their discussions should not turn into rants or complaint sessions, but rather stay focused on the positive goal of building a better home life.

Review Schedule

Briefly review the schedule for the day, explaining where students and parents should go for their breakout sessions and when you'll break for snacks and for lunch. Now would also be a good time to introduce your group leaders. Make sure everyone knows each other so they will feel comfortable sharing together later on.

Session One: The Dream Team

Opening Activity: Top Draft Pick

Supplies Needed: one sheet of posterboard and pens/markers for each table, one football player card per table (optional)

Remind everyone of the parent/child football analogy you shared earlier. Invite them to look at the player cards on their table.

Tell the parent tables to imagine what kind of child would be a dream “player” for their team. Ask them to create a jumbo playing card using their posterboard and listing the “stats” of their top draft pick: How would they act? How would they treat their parents? What activities would they be involved in? What ones would they avoid?

Now tell the student tables to imagine the ideal “coach.” Have them create playing cards as well, listing stats for the perfect parents: How would they act? What kind of rules would they make for their teens? How would they treat their kids?

Encourage everyone to be creative in designing the playing cards for their draft pick: They may draw a player picture, name the team, etc. Allow the tables to work on their player cards for about ten minutes. Then have the tables take turns displaying and sharing the highlights from their cards with the whole group.

Follow-up Questions

1. What were some of the common traits your groups used to describe the perfect parents? The perfect kids?
2. Were there any areas where your groups disagreed on what the perfect parents or kids would be like?
3. Do you see any desires or goals that both parents and students share?
4. For students: What kinds of real-life pressures and problems prevent you from living up to your parents’ ideals?
5. For parents: What kinds of real-life pressures and problems prevent you from living up to your kids’ ideals?

Session One Breakout—Teen Huddle

Introduction

This time is reserved to give teens the opportunity to discuss how to deal with their parent's imperfections. Before you dive into the discussion questions, read these discussion guidelines:

- » Practice confidentiality. What's said in the group stays in the group.
- » Respect other people's views, even when they are different than your own.
- » When someone is talking, don't interrupt. Listen carefully. Then wait your turn to talk.
- » Remember that this is not a parent-bashing session. The goal is to come up with some helpful insights and ideas that will help you get along with your parents better.

Discussion

1. Do you think any teen has the perfect parents? Why or why not?
 - » Why do so many teens feel like everyone else's parents are better than theirs?
 - » Do you think teens hold other parents to a different set of standards than they do their own parents?
2. Can you think of an example of a "stupid parent" incident in your life? Was there ever a time when your parents just didn't get you?
 - » How did you act?
 - » How did your parents act?
 - » Looking back, can you think of anything you could have done differently to help the situation turn out better?
3. What kinds of situations or issues tend to cause tension between parents and teens?
 - » Why do you think these issues cause such problems in the average parent-child relationship?
 - » What do parents do that make these problems worse?
 - » What do teens do that make these problems worse?
4. Think about the discussion following our large-group activity: What were some of the pressures and problems your parents mentioned that make it difficult for them to be good parents?
 - » When you look at life from your parents' perspective, does it help you understand them any better?

5. Do you think parents really understand the pressures and problems that you face today? Why or why not?
6. Do you think most teens treat their parents the way they themselves would like to be treated? Why or why not?
7. What's the difference between a normal "less-than-perfect" parent and a crazy parent who isn't safe?
 - » What kinds of behaviors are unacceptable and require outside intervention?
 - » What should a kid do if they find themselves in a dangerous parent-child relationship?

Prayer Time

Give each student a blank piece of paper. Ask them to think about at least one area where they'd like to build better understanding with their parents. What is one thing they'd like to see change as a result of this conference? Have them write their goal as a simple prayer request. (Note: They do *not* need to sign their name.) They should hand their requests to the discussion leader, who will then shuffle the sheets and redistribute one prayer request to each student. End the session by having the students say short prayers for each other's requests.

Alternative: If running short on time, the discussion leader may say one prayer for all the requests.

Session One Breakout—Parent Huddle

Introduction

This time is reserved to give parents the opportunity to discuss how to deal with their teen's imperfections. Before you dive into the discussion questions, read these discussion guidelines:

- » Practice confidentiality. What's said in the group stays in the group.
- » Respect other people's views, even when they are different than your own.
- » When someone is talking, don't interrupt. Listen carefully. Then wait your turn to talk.
- » Remember that this is not a kid-bashing session. The goal is to come up with some helpful insights and ideas that will help you get along with your children better.

Discussion

1. Can you think of any situations where you felt like a “stupid parent”? Times when you’ve felt misunderstood—or when you just didn’t understand your children?
 - » How did you handle the situation?
 - » How did your child handle the situation?
 - » What could you have done differently that might have helped things turn out better?

2. Consider this quote from *Not-So-Stupid Parents*: “Some parents just disengage, opting to leave the kid alone until things cool down, while others tighten up the reigns and attempt to garner more control of their loose-cannon teenager.”
 - » Do you agree that these tend to be the two approaches parents take toward their teens?
 - » Do you think one approach is better than the other? Or are there pitfalls for both?
 - » Which approach do you lean toward?

3. In *Not-So-Stupid Parents*, Hayley DiMarco writes, “Your teenagers don’t hate you. They love you” (p.15). Does this statement seem hard to believe? Why or why not?
 - » Why do you think teens often seem to save their worst behavior for the home?
 - » Do you have any coping mechanisms that help you deal with your teens when they are in a bad mood?

4. What do you think it means to be the authority in the parent-child relationship?
 - » What responsibilities does a parent have toward their child? Do these change as a child grows up? If so, how?
 - » What responsibilities do children have toward their parents? Do these change as a child grows up? If so, how?

5. The author suggests that when it comes to parenting teens, we should “know them inside and out so we can treat each one in a way that fits his or her own unique personality and temperament” (p.18).
 - » How do you find the right balance between trying to mold your teen’s lifestyle and values in a healthy direction and respecting the unique individual God created them to be?
 - » How might parenting a teen go better when you take their unique personality into consideration?

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well would you say you know your teenager? What are some practical ways you could get to know him/her better?

Prayer Time

Give each parent a blank piece of paper. Ask them to think about at least one area where they'd like to build better understanding with their kids. What is one thing they'd like to see change as a result of this conference? Have them write their goal as a simple prayer request. (Note: They do *not* need to sign their name.) They should hand their requests to the discussion leader, who will then shuffle the sheets and redistribute one prayer request to each parent. End the session by having the parents say short prayers for each other's requests.

Alternative: If running short on time, the discussion leader may say one prayer for all the requests.

Break

As the breakout session time ends and your groups comes back together, give everyone a few minutes to grab a cup of coffee or a pop and a bite to eat before diving back into it.

Session Two: Running the Right Plays

Session Two Activity: Yelling Match

Supplies Needed: Scorecards numbered 1–10 (enough for all but 4 of the tables)

Before this activity, have everyone rearrange themselves so that there are at least two parents and two students at each table. Explain that actual parents and teens should not pair themselves together, but mix with the parents/teens of others. Choose four tables to serve as acting troupes, and explain that the rest of the tables will be judges for this activity.

Each troupe will act out an impromptu disagreement that might occur between parents and teenagers. However, parents may only act out the parts of teenagers, and teens may only act out the parts of parents. Each acting troupe will have two minutes to act out their argument, and they will be competing to see who can make their argument the worst.

Do not give any troupe their acting scenario until they are ready to perform. Then they will have 30 seconds to read the scenario and choose their actors before you begin timing their skit. (Not all members of the table need to actually act in the skit).

- » **Scenario #1:** A teen comes home 20 minutes past curfew. The teen thinks his/her curfew is too early, but the parents think their curfew is fair.
- » **Scenario #2:** It's Saturday afternoon and a parent has just asked their teen—for the third time—to wash the family van.
- » **Scenario #3:** A teen wants to go to a concert with some friends. The concert is in a city three hours away and the parents don't think it's a good idea for a bunch of teens to go that far alone.
- » **Scenario #4:** It's Friday night and a teenager is about to go out with some of their new friends. The parents forbid them from going, however, because they don't trust this new group of friends.

Encourage the actors to have fun with this activity, exaggerating their characters to create a big argument. After each group has performed their skit, have each judging table give a score on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being “the worst fight ever”). If you want, you may hand out a small prize to the winners before moving on to the follow-up questions below.

Follow-up Questions

1. What kinds of things did your parents and teens do or say that made the arguments escalate?
2. Who “won” the arguments in each skit?
3. How was the idea of authority handled in these skits? Could you tell who was in charge? Why or why not?
4. For parents: How do you usually feel after having an argument with your kids?
5. For students: How do you usually feel after having an argument with your parents?
6. Do negative actions/words end up bringing parents and kids closer to their goals or further away? Why?

Session Two Breakout—Teen Huddle

Introduction

This time is reserved for teen’s to talk out and discuss together any of the disagreements that were presented in the Yelling Match activity. They should also brainstorm solutions to resolve these disagreements.

Discussion

1. Is it easy or difficult for teens to accept that their parents have authority over them? Why?
 - » How will learning to deal with your parents’ authority prepare you for situations later in life?
 - » Does accepting your parents’ authority mean that you are helpless in the relationship? Why or why not?
2. In what ways do teens sometimes try to take control from their parents?
3. Consider this quote from p. 30: “Understanding what you have or can offer another person is called leverage, and you can use it with your parents just like in a business deal.”
 - » What do you have to offer your parents as “leverage”?
4. Why do you think parents nag?
 - » Why do teens tend to have negative reactions to their parents’ requests and rules?
 - » What do you think of Hayley’s suggestion to just do what they say right away?
 - » Discuss this quote from p. 36: “See, their nagging isn’t all about bossing you around. It’s one part needing your help to get things done and one part wanting to teach you some skills. . .” Have you ever seen nagging from this perspective?

Session Two: Running the Right Plays

5. How should teens handle embarrassment with their parents in a way that doesn't damage their relationship?
6. How would your relationship with your parents change if you focused more on their feelings instead of your own?
 - » How would you act to show them that you care?
 - » How do you think they would respond?
7. Why do you think parents tend to be overprotective of their kids?
 - » In what ways do teens contribute to this problem?
 - » What are some ways you could show your parents that you are responsible and trustworthy?
8. Is apologizing a sign of weakness or strength? Why?
 - » When should a teen apologize to their parents?
 - » Why are apologies so hard? Should they be?

Individual Time

Give each student a copy of the "Studying the Playbook" handout. Spend the remaining time in silence (or play some background music) while the students complete the questions.

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Session Two Breakout—Parent Huddle

Introduction

This time is reserved for parent's to talk out and discuss together any of the disagreements that were presented in the Yelling Match activity. They should also brainstorm solutions to resolve these disagreements.

Discussion

1. Is it more important to be your teen's friend or authority figure at this point in their lives?
 - » Is it possible to be both?
 - » In what ways do teens sometimes try to take authority away from the parent?

2. Discuss this quote from the book: "I find that the best way to teach a teenager is not by ultimatums and drawing the line but by education. . . . They need some options to learn by, places to fall down and get back up again" (p. 26).
 - » Why is it important to give kids a place to make their own decisions?
 - » How can you encourage your teens to make the right choices without *forcing* your opinions on them? Is there ever a time when you should set your foot down?
 - » What are some practical ways to *empower* instead of *overpower* them?
3. Discuss this quote from the book: ". . . though your teens don't by any means have the responsibilities that you have, they might just feel the same kind of exhausting pressure that you feel without possessing the maturity and perspective to deal with it" (p. 30).
 - » Does this concept change your perspective on what to expect from your teen? Why or why not?
 - » How do you think nagging makes a stressed-out teenager feel? What alternatives could you try?
 - » What are some practical ways that you could help your teen learn how to manage their time and workload better?
4. In what ways does overprotective parenting lead to the development of irresponsible adults?
 - » What would be some indications of an overprotective parent?
 - » How would your parenting perspective change if you started with the assumption that your child is sometimes going to make mistakes?
5. What are some practical ways to allow your teenager more responsibility?
 - » What if your teen fails in the responsibilities you give them?
 - » How should you handle your teen's mistakes?
6. Consider this quote "When hormones are raging and brains are still growing, teenagers' minds can play tricks on them" (p. 76). How does this concept help you understand a teenager's emotional reactions?
 - » How can you offer support when your teen is going through an emotional issue, while also encouraging them to move on in a healthy way?
7. Is apologizing a sign of weakness in a parent? Why or why not?
 - » When should a parent apologize to their teen?

Individual Time

Handout

Give each parent a copy of the "Studying the Playbook" handout. Spend the remaining time in silence (or play some background music) while parents complete the questions.

Lunch Break

For lunch break, tell the parents/students to go out to eat together—without other families or friends present. Explain that the goal is for them to enjoy “family time” and have some real conversation together. Give them a copy of the “Pep Talk” handout and encourage them to use the questions to spark conversation.



Session Three: Team Communication

Session Three Activity: Going for the Win

Supplies Needed: Copies of the “Going for the Win” handout, paper, and pens/pencils

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Before the activity begins, make sure you have enough copies of the “Going for the Win” handouts for parents and teens. Also, divide the room into separate parent and teen tables as this activity begins.

Hand each table a copy of the “Going for the Win” handout and ask them to work through the questions together as a table. Give them 10 minutes for this discussion.

Now ask the students to pair up with their parents. This will require that parents and students shift to different tables, so give everyone a minute to find seats. (There should be room for two or three parent/teen teams at each table.)

Tell the students to imagine that they are going to make one of the requests that they discussed in their student group. (Tell them to choose the scenario they think their parents would be *least* likely to agree with.) Ask them to make their case to their parents, and then give their parents a chance to respond. Encourage the parent/student teams to practice the negotiating skills they read about in *Stupid Parents/Not-So-Stupid Parents* and to be creative about finding a win-win solution that would make them all happy. If they have time, they can discuss the other scenario as well.

After parents and students have had 5–10 minutes for their discussions, move on to the follow-up questions below:

Follow-up Questions

1. What were some of the creative win-win solutions you came up with?
2. Was the prep time you spent before the discussion helpful? Why or why not?
3. How might the discussions have gone differently if neither side had spent any time considering the “strategy” before the big talk?
4. Were the teens’ arguments weakened when they acknowledged the weaknesses of their idea? Why or why not?
5. In general, what makes parents likely to grant a request? What do you think makes them unlikely to grant a request?

Session Three Breakout—Teen Huddle

Introduction

This is an opportunity for the teens to discuss together the win-win situations that were presented in the last activity.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is trust such an important issue in the parent-child relationship?
 - » What are some things teenagers do that could destroy trust with their parents?
 - » How do you treat someone you don't trust? Why?
2. Discuss this quote from p. 70: "If you can't be honest with yourself about yourself, then you can't be honest with anyone."
 - » How does having a realistic picture of yourself help you in dealing with other people?
 - » How does having an unrealistic picture of yourself mess up your view of life?
3. Discuss this quote from p. 75: "Don't use honesty as an excuse to hurt someone."
 - » How might a teenager use honesty to hurt someone? To hurt a parent?
 - » When is it better to keep the truth to yourself instead of speaking it to someone?
4. How big of an impact does your attitude make on your daily life?
 - » What has a bigger long-term effect—what happens to you, or the way you react to what happens to you?
 - » How could a bad attitude impact your relationship with your parents?
 - » What are some positive steps you could take to develop a better attitude about your parents?
5. Why is it important to spend time with your parents?
 - » What's more important—a teen's relationship with their parents or their friends? Who should they spend more time with? Why?
 - » How would your relationship to your parents change if you were willing to spend more time and effort on them?
6. What are some ways to build trust with your parents through everyday actions?
 - » How does building trust in everyday ways improve your chances of gaining their approval for special requests?

7. How should you act when you're having a "big talk" with your parents about a special request or issue?
 - » What behaviors show your parents that you understand and respect them?
 - » What behaviors should be avoided?

8. What should you do if your parents still say "no" to your requests, even when you've acted responsibly and made a good argument?
 - » What happens if a teen refuses to accept their parents' last word? How does that affect the trust in the parent-child relationship?

Strategy Time

End the Teen Huddle with this simple activity: On a whiteboard or piece of posterboard, draw a line down the middle. Then label one side "Good Plays" and the other side "Bad Plays." Now ask them to consider everything they've learned at this conference and have them offer suggestions for the "Good Plays" and "Bad Plays" columns of their diagram. What are the "good plays" they can try to build better communication with their parents? What are the "bad plays" they should avoid? Encourage the teens to take these suggestions to heart when they head home today.

Session Three Breakout—Parent Huddle

Introduction

This is an opportunity for the parents to discuss together the win-win situations that were presented in the last activity.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do a teen's experiences at home impact the way they interact outside the home?
 - » What kinds of communication skills do you want your teen to have as they head toward adulthood?

2. Why is it important for teens and their parents to spend time together?
 - » When you were a teenager, what kind of presence did you want from your own parents?
 - » What are some effective—and practical—ways you can be present and available to your teen?

3. How can small talks help prepare you to handle the “big talks” better?
 - » What kinds of issues/questions are good for a small talk with your teen?
 - » Are there any topics of conversation that should be off-limits when it comes to your kids? Any topics you should save for the adults in your life? If so, why?
4. Why is trust such an important issue between teen and parent?
 - » How can you help build trust with your teenagers?
 - » What are some ways you can give your teens opportunity to build trust with you?
5. When it comes to the “big” discussions/negotiations, is it important for you to let your teen “win” some of the time? Is it important for you to “win” some of the time? Why or why not?
 - » What other goals should you keep in mind, besides who “wins” the debate?
 - » How do these “big talks” help you prepare your teen for negotiations in the “real world”?
6. How should you handle a situation when you need to turn down your teen’s request?
 - » What’s the difference between *telling* them your decision and *informing* them about your decision? Why is that an important distinction?

Strategy Time

End the Parent Huddle with this simple activity: On a whiteboard or piece of posterboard, draw a line down the middle. Then label one side “Good Plays” and the other side “Bad Plays.” Now ask them to consider everything they’ve learned at this conference and have them offer suggestions for the “Good Plays” and “Bad Plays” columns of their diagram. What are the “good plays” they can try to build better communication with their kids? What are the “bad plays” they should avoid? Encourage parents to take these suggestions to heart when they head home today.

Snack Break

Give parents and students a few moments to relax and mingle during a snack break. If you’d like, you may offer the Video Confessions activity (outlined below) during this break.

Video Confessions (optional)

Hopefully, parents and students have learned a lot about each other by this stage of the conference. Yet even armed with the right information, parents and teens can sometimes find it awkward to start meaningful discussion with each other. This activity will give parents and students the opportunity to share their thoughts with each other in a non-threatening way. And it also offers you a perfect way to follow up on the event.

Session Three: Team Communication

Borrow several digital video cameras and set each one up in a private room, facing two chairs. Ask for one volunteer to man the camera in each room. If necessary, have extra memory cards on hand for the cameras.

For each room, make a sign listing these questions:

1. What have you learned about yourself today?
2. What have you learned about your parents/child today?
3. What do you like about your relationship with your parents/child right now?
4. What would you like to see change in your relationship with your parents/child right now?

Throughout snack time, invite both parents and students to take a few minutes for a “video confession.” (You’ll want to have a complete list of all students and parents on hand so you can cross off the names as they complete their confession.) Explain that this is an opportunity for them to say something meaningful to their parents/child and they’ll receive more instructions when they get to the room.

Invite parents and students into the rooms separately (although moms and dads may go together). The camera operator should explain that they can say whatever they want to their parents/child, but there is a sign with questions to guide them if they need some direction. The camera operator will start the video recording for them and then exit the room. They will wait two minutes before giving a warning knock, and then enter 15 seconds after the knock to stop the recorder.

After the conference, sort through the recordings, matching the parents with their child. Burn a DVD for each family and mail it to them (or pass them out at your next youth group event), along with a copy of the “Glad You Came” handout.



Closing Session

Supplies Needed: Mini-footballs (or another football-related object), permanent markers

For this closing session, ask the teens to be seated by their parents.

Thank everyone for coming to the conference and give them the opportunity to share any closing comments or questions they may have about the day.

Before they leave, ask the parents and students to discuss these last questions with each other:

1. What is one practical thing each of you wants to do differently as a result of what you've learned today?
2. What are some goals you can work toward together?

While they are talking, hand out a mini-football and a permanent marker to each set of parents and their child.

Explain that the mini-footballs represent that they're playing on the same team—and that you want them to achieve their goals for a better parent/child relationship. Have them write their action steps and goals on the football with a permanent marker and encourage them to put it in a place where they'll see it often—by the TV or on the kitchen windowsill, for example—and be reminded of their commitments.

End the event with a closing prayer.

Handouts

Session One Breakout—Teen Huddle

Studying Your PlayBook

Maybe it doesn't always feel like it, but you and your parents are really on the same team. And you're both hoping to reach the same goal: A peaceful home where you feel loved and accepted. But have your actions been helping you achieve that touchdown? Or is time to consider some new plays? Take a few minutes to think about the following questions:

1. What do you tend to argue about with your parents?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
2. Do your parents do much nagging? If so, about what?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
3. Do your parents embarrass you? If so, how?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
4. What happens when you're dealing with a heavy emotional issue?
 - » How do you usually act toward your parents at these times?
 - » How do they usually respond?
5. Now look at your current "playbook." Do you like the way you're acting? Do you like the responses you're getting from your parents? If not, it's time to change the play.
 - » How would you like your parents to respond to this issue?
 - » How could you act to get that response? (Keep in mind Hayley's suggestion that you respect your parents' authority)

So the next time some nagging, embarrassment, or disagreement comes up, try your new strategy!
Write down that new play one more time below, just to make sure it's ingrained in your mind:

My new actions:

My Parents new response: (Hopefully!)

Talk It over with the coach

When you get home from this conference, share your new plays with your parent(s). If necessary, apologize for past behaviors. Then talk over your new strategy with your parents, asking for any additional suggestions they may have.

Session One Breakout—Parent Huddle

Studying Your PlayBook

Maybe it doesn't always feel like it, but you and your teen are really on the same team. And you're both hoping to reach the same goal: A peaceful home where you feel loved and accepted. But have your actions been helping you achieve that touchdown? Or is time to consider some new plays? Take a couple minutes to think about the following questions:

1. What do you tend to argue about with your teen?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
2. Do you have to nag your child to get things done? If so, what do you nag about most?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
3. Does your child ever indicate that they are embarrassed by you? If so, what embarrasses them?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
4. Does your child tend to go into emotional overload at times? What issues seem to spark the most emotion?
 - » How do you usually act about this?
 - » How do they usually respond?
5. Now look at your current "playbook." Do you like the way you're acting? Do you like the responses you're getting from your teen? If not, it's time to change the play.
 - » How would you *like* your teen to respond to this issue?
 - » How could you act to get that response?

So the next time some nagging, embarrassment, or disagreement comes up, try your new strategy!
Write down that new play one more time below, just to make sure it's ingrained in your mind:

My new actions:

My teen's new response: (Hopefully!)

Talk It Over with the Team

When you get home from this conference, share your new plays with your teen. If necessary, apologize for past behaviors. Then talk over your new strategy with your teen, asking for any additional suggestions they may have.

Lunch Time Assignment

Pep Talk

It's lunchtime! So go out and enjoy a bite to eat together. And talk. Discuss something you've learned at this conference so far. Or chat about some of the questions below. Or come up with some questions of your own. But remember, your goal is to have some happy, healthy conversation. This isn't the time to settle old disagreements or start new ones. If the conversation starts getting heated, move on to a different topic. This is just a time for getting to know each other a little better.

Teen to Parent

1. What were your parents like when you were a teenager? Did you ever have fights? What did you fight about?
2. What do you wish your parents had done differently?
3. What are some of your favorite family memories?
4. Did you like school as a teen? Why or why not?
5. What kind of jobs or activities were you involved in as a teen?
6. What is one really cool thing that happened to you this week?
7. What was a frustrating thing that happened to you this week?
8. If you had a day completely free, what would you do to enjoy yourself?

Parent to Teen

1. What are some of the things your friends' families do that you wish we did?
2. What are some of the things your friends' families do that you dislike?
3. What are some of your favorite memories as a family?
4. If you had a day completely free, what would you do to enjoy yourself?
5. What is one really cool thing that happened to you this week?
6. What was a frustrating thing that happened to you this week?
7. How do you like school? Do you have a favorite class? Why is it your favorite?
8. When it comes to your jobs/activities, do you wish you were more involved or less involved? Why?

Session Three Activity: Student Version

Going for the Win

Below you'll read two situations that could cause disagreement between parents and teens. Your job is to create a "winning play" that would help a teen get what they want—while still showing respect for their parents and maintaining peace in the home. For each situation, consider the questions that follow. On the back of this paper, jot down some notes on how you'd present your idea as a win-win for both you and your parents.

Situation #1: You've had your driver's license for 5 months, but you still don't have your own vehicle. Now you'd like to buy your own car.

Situation #2: You met a same-gender friend on last year's summer mission trip, but they live four hours away. You want to meet up with them for a weekend night at a city halfway between your two hometowns. You'd each drive two hours to the halfway point and stay at a hotel before driving back the next day.

1. What would be some positive results for you and your parents if they agreed to your plan?
2. What objections do you think a parent might have to this idea? Are there any weaknesses to your plan?
3. In what ways could you try to overcome those objections? (Remember: You're looking for ways to show that you understand their concerns and have thought through solutions.)

Session Three Activity: Parent Version

Going for the Win

Below you will read two situations that could cause disagreement between parents and teens. Your job is to create a “winning play” that would help you satisfy your teen’s desires without compromising your concerns. For each situation, consider the questions that follow. Jot down some notes on how you could respond to their request in a loving and affirming way—even if you don’t plan on giving them exactly what they want.

- » Situation #1: Your teen has had their driver’s license for 5 months, and now they’d like to buy their own car.
- » Situation #2: Your teen met a same-gender friend on last year’s summer mission trip, but they live four hours away. Your teen wants to meet up with them for a weekend night at a city halfway between the two hometowns. They’d each drive two hours to the halfway point and stay at a hotel before driving back the next day.

1. What objections or concerns would you have about this idea?
2. Would you ever consider agreeing to this idea or would it be a non-negotiable “no” to you? Why?
3. Are there any alternative ideas you could suggest that would meet your teen halfway?

Video Confessions Post-Conference Handout

Glad You Came

- » Thanks for coming to our *Stupid (or Not-So-Stupid?) Parents* event. We hope you learned a lot and are already seeing a better team dynamic in your home!
- » During the event, you took a few minutes to share some thoughts with each other via our video cameras. Now's your opportunity to practice those communication skills and share your video confessions with each other.
- » Watch this DVD together, and then take a few moments to remember and recommit to some of the goals you set at the conference.

And remember, we're praying for you and cheering your team on, every step of the way.

About Hayley



Hayley DiMarco writes cutting-edge and best-selling books for teens including *Mean Girls*, *Mean Girls Gone*, *Sexy Girls*, *Technical Virgin*, *Dateable*, *The Dateable Rules*, *The Dirt on Dating* and *The Dirt on Breaking Up*. Hayley also writes books for former teens including *Marriable* and *Mean Girls All Grown Up*. Her goal is to give practical answers for life's problems and encourage readers to form stronger spiritual lives. Hayley is Chief Creative Officer and founder of Hungry Planet, an independent publishing imprint and communications company that feeds the world's appetite for truth. Hungry Planet helps organizations understand and reach the multi-tasking mindset, while Hungry Planet books tackle life's everyday issues with a distinctly modern spiritual voice. For more information on Hungry Planet including leader resources and online communities that revolve around

the books, visit www.hungryplanet.net.