

## PASTORAL CARE STRATEGIES

### STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING HEALTHY ADOLESCENT GROWTH

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#### **Strategy #1: Promote Positive Values.**

Through all of our efforts we need to promote values that center on caring about others as well as oneself, such as serving others, caring about other people's feelings and attending to their well-being, concern for betterment of life for all people, and valuing sexual restraint.

#### **Strategy #2: Develop Social Competence and Social Skills.**

Through a variety of programs and activities we need to develop (a) self-esteem, (b) assertiveness skills, (c) decision-making skills, (d) friend-making skills, (e) planning skills, (f) a positive view of personal future, (g) nonviolent conflict resolution, etc.

#### **Strategy #3: Create Opportunities for Youth to be Contributing Members of the Church Community.**

Youth need to be able to participate in meaningful, valued activities and roles in the Christian community. Involvement in parish ministries and leadership roles enhances their sense of responsibility and purpose and nurtures a sense of belonging and loyalty to the community.

#### **Strategy #4: Provide Caring and Supportive Relationships in the Church Community and Youth Programs.**

Youth need more meaningful contact with adults who they can have frequent, in-depth conversations and go to for advice and support. Every community can nurture caring and supportive relationships through mentoring, youth-to-youth peer ministry, and intergenerational programming.

#### **Strategy #5: Partner with Parents and Families.**

Families and churches share the task of promoting healthy growth. Churches need to get involved with families by connecting youth programming with family life, providing resources that assist parents in sharing faith and values, offering parent education that assists parents in understanding their adolescents and developing effective parenting skills, creating family-based or parent-teen or intergenerational programming. Families need to experience the support of the church community as they seek to share faith and values at home.

#### **Strategy #6: Provide Parent Education, Encouragement, Support Networks, and Resources.**

Parent education is one of the best investments youth ministry leaders can make in the positive development of youth. Providing parents with developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills for parenting adolescents through workshops, courses, and resources; building support networks among parents, and making available in-home parenting resources (print, video, cassettes, etc.) are three strategies for strengthening the skills of parents.

#### **Strategy #7: Provide a Variety of Meaningful, Stimulating, Challenging and Constructive Youth Activities and Programs. Provide Catechesis for Christian Living.**

Young people need to be involved in stimulating, challenging and constructive youth activities where they can learn skills and values, and grow in Christian faith through action. Quality service programs which engage youth in contributing to the community, learning new skills, and putting their faith into action should be high on the list of every church's youth ministry programs. Religious education programs which teach *both* knowledge of the Christian tradition and skills for living as disciples today is another example. This style of religious education program encourages independent thinking and questioning and effectively helps youth to apply their faith to daily decisions and life experiences.

**Strategy #8: Provide Meaningful Service Involvements for Young People.**

Service is an excellent way to develop prosocial (caring) values and behaviors in young people. Be sure to include education, action, and reflection; as well as a wide variety of service involvements to respond to the diversity of youth interests. You may want to explore the possibilities of incorporating a youth component into parish service projects by identifying which parish groups are engaged in service to the community and then working with them to include youth in their present and future service projects. Another idea is to utilize diocesan or community service projects that are already developed, and invite youth to participate as a parish group. A third way of organizing service is to utilize national programs that are already developed and invite youth to participate.

**Strategy #9: Engage Youth In Leadership and Leadership Training**

The knowledge and skills needed for effective leadership and the experience of leading promote positive youth development. Invite young people into leadership roles in the school, youth program, and/or parish community. Involving youth in leadership in the parish community is a great way to build mentoring relationships between adults and youth, and to utilize the gifts and talents of youth in the parish community. Think about all possibilities for leadership in the ministries, programs, and activities of the parish: parish council, parish committees (liturgy, social activities, religious education), organizing parish social events, serving as catechists for children.

**Strategy #10: Address Specific At-Risk Concerns among Youth.**

Provide information about issues such as sexuality and substance abuse *and* connect these issues to their faith, their values, and their experiences. Complement the education that young people received in educational settings with a faith perspective.

**Strategy #11: Uphold High Expectations for Adolescents.**

**Strategy #12: Get Involved in Community Networking, Cooperation and Collaboration to Address the Needs of Young People.**

Churches need to work with other community organizations in a common effort to promote healthy adolescent development. Sharing resources, co-sponsoring programming, mobilizing the community to address youth issues are only some of the ways churches and community organizations can work together for the common good of all young people. One idea for using community resources is to develop and distribute a directory of recommended counseling resources that youth and their families can use for assistance in times of trouble. A parish or school can print cards with phone numbers of crisis intervention services, support groups, resource people and agencies. The directory can also include a list of community educational programs and resources (books and videos) for youth and/or parents that address adolescent/family concerns and problems. A second approach is to create a calendar that lists all of the *recommended* parish and community events for youth and for families in a given month or season (3-4 months). This is a great way to alert youth and their families to upcoming programs, activities, and events and to invite them to participate. Make sure that the calendar includes pertinent information on each event. Mail the calendar to every youth and their parents or insert it into the parish bulletin. Be sure to highlight parish activities.