

Support Statistics

Contributed by Admin
Monday, 14 May 2007
Last Updated Friday, 25 June 2010

Study after study consistently shows that parents are the most important influence on a teen's life. This is a collection of some of those findings for you to use in whatever way you need to help you institute this model of youth ministry.

Children who converse with their father "most days" rated themselves 87 out of 100 on a happiness scale, while those who rarely talk to their dads scored a 79. These findings are being called "highly significant" because research has demonstrated that a person's well-being later in life has a lot to do with their relationship with both parents during the teen years. (New York Daily News, June 18, 2010)

An observation after a school took a challenge to live without text messaging for 2 days: "The experiment left Kayla Waterman, a 12-year old sixth grader, with a new appreciation for the convenience of texting over calling. On Monday morning, instead of texting, she called her mom to let her know there were 'a gazillion fire trucks at school.' Then she called right back: false alarm--fire drill. 'I could tell she was getting annoyed because I kept calling,' Kayla said. How many times during the school day does she usually text her mom? About 10, Kayla said; a friend nodded in agreement. Boundaries between work and home have long since fallen, so maybe it should not be surprising that the same is true for school and home. But what middle school student 20 years ago would have voluntarily reached out to her mother 10 times between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.? (New York Times, April 27, 2010)

Teens say it's the simple things -like taking walks, sharing meals, playing games, watching TV and talking more with each other - that they most want to do more of with their parents. (Opinion Research Corporation)

70% of teens said they were happy with how much attention they get from their parents. Yet almost a quarter of those said they wished they could spend more time together with their parents. (Family Circle survey, ConnectwithKids.com, May 5, 2010)

Youth Market Alert trend for 2010--Family Fusion: "Today's teenagers treat their parents like friends, and vice versa. ...Evidence? Tween girls look up to their moms more than any other person. And 75% of parents say they feel 'extremely' close to their children. ...Examples of companies bending what they do to serve family fusion are everywhere--for example, mother-daughter pairs going to the Twilight films together and the video game The Beatles Rock Band strategically advertising to both generations."

Lack of a generation gap: "Today's kids aren't taking up arms against their parents; they're too busy texting them. The members of the millennial generation, ages 18 to 29, are so close to their parents that college students typically check in about ten times a week, and they are all Facebook friends. Kids and parents dress alike, listen to the same music and fight less than previous generations, and millennials assert that older people's moral values are generally superior to their own." --Nancy Gibb, Time, March 11, 2010

From a survey of 26,000 Christian teens, 52.4% say that spending time with their parents is one of their favorite things to do. Also 85.1% say their family is very supportive of their relationship with Christ and is great about helping them grow closer to Jesus. (Group, September/October 2009)

Asked to Dr. Christian Smith about his ongoing research for The Study on Youth and Religion: What are the traits of religious American teenagers who retain a high faith commitment as emerging adults?

"The most important factor is parents. For better or worse, parents are tremendously important in shaping their children's faith trajectories. That's the story that came out in Soul Searching. It's also the story that comes out here.

"Another factor is youth having established devotional lives--that is, praying, reading Scripture--during the teenage years. Those who do so as teenagers are much more likely than those who don't to continue doing so into emerging adulthood. In some cases, having other adults in a congregation who you have relationships with, and who are supportive and provide modeling, also matters. (Christianity Today, October 20, 2009)

From research that targets what parents think they know about their kids but really don't: "Most parents think their kids secretly wish their jobs weren't so demanding so they could spend more time together. But the truth is that kids simply wish their parents were less stressed and tired.

"Today's parents spend lots of time with their kids, but it's often dominated by rushing from one commitment to another." It is also important to teens that there is time to hang around together.

"Most kids are clamoring to loop back to their parents while simultaneously pushing them away. We thought development as kind of a straight line toward independence. But all through development, there's separation and connection...they go hand in hand.

"Only a third of kids believe their parents are engaged in their lives enough to pursue them well. One teenager told the researcher, "I want my parents to ask me about my day and care about what I answer." (Families and Work Institute findings, Group, September/October 2009)

"Most adolescents in fact still very badly want the loving input and engagement of their parents — more, in fact, than most parents ever realize. They simply want that input and engagement on renegotiated grounds that take seriously their growing maturity and desired independence. All too often, however, parents misinterpret their teenager's signals about renegotiated relationships as simple demands to be left alone and, for whatever reasons, they readily comply. So just at a time when teenagers most need engaged parents to help them work out a whole series of big questions about what they believe, think, value, feel, are committed to, and want to be and become, in many cases, their parents are withdrawing from them." (Dr. Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition, The Religious & Spiritual Life of Emerging Adults*)

Tweens, teens, and young adults say they would call their moms first when they got in trouble. Calling dad is their second choice. All three age groups also say they trust their moms the most. The tweens chose their dads as second choice but teens and young adults chose friends as their second choice. (YouthPulse 2009, Trends & Tudes, December 2009)

Teens are less likely to become habitual smokers when their parents have a "positive family management" style such as monitoring their comings and goings, doling out reasonable punishments for rule-breaking and rewarding good behavior. Teens who had such parenting had a 31% chance of becoming daily smoker. The odds were 71 percent among teenagers with parents who smoked and were more lax in managing their kids' behavior. (University of Washington/Seattle study, Reuters News, August 26, 2009)

Among 15-year-olds who say they know their own spark, only 77% indicate that their parents help them cultivate their spark. Other spark-igniters are: friends, 58%; grandparents and other family members, 52%; people at school, 48%; coaches, mentors or other youth workers, 43%; a religious leader, 29% or a neighbor, 16%.

Sparks are a metaphor for describing how 15-year olds experience talents, interests, or strengths that make them feel really happy, energized, and passionate, and that give them real purpose, direction, or focus. Teen Voice 2009 report, The Search Institute)

Parents and teenagers are hanging out more together now than 25 years ago. 70% of teens say they regularly spend time with their mothers in 2006 compared to 62% in 1986. For fathers, the figure had increased from 47% to 52%. Parents today are also more likely to know where their teenage children are and what they are doing than their 1980s equivalents. The proportion asking what their children were doing has increased from 47% in 1986 to 66% in 2006. (Nuffield Foundation Study, ScienceDaily.com, August 2, 2009)

Don Tapscott, chairman of business strategy think tank New Paradigm, is noticing the trend of how close today's teens are to mom and dad. The relationship is close that some job recruiters are meeting with parents separately when considering job candidates. (YPulse.com, June 5, 2009)

Family activities were the most important protective factor against teen sex--teens who ate dinner with their families and engaged in other types of family activities on a regular basis had lower sexual risk behaviors than average. Also discovered was that fathers who were more knowledgeable about their child's friends and activities decreased the sexual risk behaviors of that child. (Child Development Journal, May/June 2009)

-

"While the vast majority (83 percent) believes parents should be most responsible for a child's spiritual development, only 35 percent say their religious faith is one of the most important influences on their parenting, according to the study. This leaves nearly half (48 percent) who acknowledge their role in their child's spiritual development, but fail to consider their own religious faith among the most important influences on their parenting." ("Lifeway Research Looks at Role of Faith in Parenting," Lifeway.com)

-

54% of teens say that being with family is the most important aspect of Christmas. (Harris Interactive, January 2009)

-

Teens, ages 15 to 17, say they enjoy spending time with their mother (79%) and father (76%). (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy survey, January 2009)

-

When it comes to who influences teens most in dating relationships, 35 percent say it is their parents. Friends came in at 28 percent. Religious leaders were only 3 percent. 67% of girls and 62% of guys say it is easy to talk to their parents about relationships. (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy survey, January 2009)

-

The top wish among girls is for their parents to communicate better with them, including more frequent and more open conversations, as well as discussions about what is happening in her life. For girls, ages 13 to 17, 67 percent turn to their moms when they are feeling badly about themselves. For girls ages 8 to 12, a huge total of 91 percent turn to their moms. For fathers of girls ages 8 to 12, 54 percent are turned to. For teen girls, ages 13 to 17, only 27 percent say they turn to their fathers. Another bad sign is at the age of 16, girls become more likely to seek support from male peers than from their own dads.

"We cannot underestimate just how vital the words and actions of parents are in fostering positive self-esteem in girls. However, it can be challenging because adolescence is not typically a time when girls are reaching out to their parents and speaking candidly. The good news is that if parents and other role models are willing to create a steady conversation of encouragement, honesty and openness it can definitely help girls gain confidence and reach their full potential." --Jess Weiner, Global Ambassador for the Dove Self-Esteem Fund (Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self Esteem, Dove Self-Esteem Fund study, October 8, 2008)

-

From a survey done for SADD, 82% say their relationships with their parents make them feel good about themselves, 68% say their parents respect them and 60% say they feel close to their parents. (Peoria Journal Star, September 6, 2008)

-

Young people who spend time with their parents, talk with them and feel close to them are overwhelmingly less likely to drink (62 percent versus 43 percent) or to use other drugs (87 percent versus 77 percent) than are those who don't. (Teens Today study, September 6, 2008)

-

From an online survey of 1,250 adults and teens conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, 67% of teens say they actually want to spend more time with their parents. (Peoria Journal Star, September 6, 2008)

-

A recent Teens Research Unlimited survey found that 9 out of 10 teens say they're "close" to their parents; 75% say they "like to do things with their family;" and 59% say family dinners are "in." (USA Today, April 14, 2008)

-

Forty-five percent of teen girls say they want to spend more time with their family. Also, 87% say they experience some stress from relationships with their family. Could spending more time together help this one stressor? (Harris Interactive/WeTV survey, March 10, 2008)

-

From IG's Trend Central's Tween Intelligence Report (created for marketers), 65% of tweens look to a parent as a role model.

-

"When asked what one thing makes them most happy, 20 percent mentioned spending time with family--more than

anything else. About three-quarters --73 percent--said their relationship with their parents makes them happy. After family, it was relationships with friends that people mentioned most." --AP/MTV poll, Associated Press, August 20, 2007

Asked of 1,100 teens, ages 12 to 18, 67.7 percent believe parents are the most important role models in today's society. Parents were followed by teachers and coaches (40.6%); siblings (40.4%); and religious leaders (18.7%). (Weekly Reader research, American Bible Society report, February 5, 2007)

The Barna Group found that 64% of tweens say they feel that they can always trust their parents to do what is right for the child. 57% of tweens also say that they look forward to spending free time with their family. But 35% say they find it easy to talk to their parents about everything that is happening in their life these days. ("Survey Describes the Ups and Downs of Tween Life," The Barna Group, September 30, 2006)

Asked of seniors who their sources of support are, parents were the primary source of support. Coming in next were youth group leaders, then peers from outside of the youth group, then peers from the youth group, and then other adults in the church. (The Center for Youth and Family Ministry, October 2006)

Asked of seniors who their sources of support are, parents were the primary source of support. Coming in next were youth group leaders, then peers from outside of the youth group, then peers from the youth group, and then other adults in the church. (The Center for Youth and Family Ministry, October 2006)

According to the data collected for the College Transition Project, one of the most significant differences parents can make in the faith of their students is through the discussions they have with their own students. Kids who report talking to parents about both their own faith, and the faith of their parents, felt more supported by God. (The Center for Youth and Family Ministry, October 2006)

Of teens ages 12 to 14 82 percent say they are close to their parents (as reported by the parent). Of teens ages 15 to 17, 76 percent say they are close to their parents. (The Family Environment and Adolescent Well-Being, Child Trends report, June 2006)

From research done by Virgin Mobile, teens name parents as their chief role model at 71 percent. The next role model named at a distant 40 percent was teachers. Another interesting side result that was discovered is that this is the first generation to share music taste with their parents. (YPulse.com)

The Mayo Clinic commissioned one of the largest research projects ever to study the root causes of teenagers' high-risk behaviors. Researchers asked more than 90,000 junior and senior high students to fill out anonymous questionnaires. Those questionnaires were followed up with more than 12,000 face-to-face interviews. Questions targeted key risk areas: mental and emotional distress, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual involvement, and violent behavior. The conclusion was, "The most effective way to protect young people from unhealthy or dangerous behaviors is for parents to be involved in their lives." In nearly every case, teenagers who reported a strong connection with their parents were less likely to engage in these behaviors.

Harris Interactive found that 68 percent of teens ages 13 to 18 say they discuss religion with their families. The same 68 percent say their religious views are similar to their parents. (Trends & Tudes, October 2005)

Asked of teens who 80 percent declared themselves Christian, 82 percent said that their parents have been good role models of how to be a person of strong and meaningful faith. (Barna Research Group, October 23, 2000)

From the National Study of Youth & Religion, 47 percent of teens say they pray with their parents once a week or more other than at mealtimes. ("Portraits of Protestant Teens: A Report on Teenagers in Major U.S. Denominations," 2005)

From a survey of teen girls, 64 percent say they are as religious or more religious than their parents. (Seventeen, December 2005)

From telephone interviews of 2,632 adults of which 922 qualified with Barna Group standards as born again Christians, 50 percent were led to Christ by their parents. ("Evangelism is Most Effective Among Kids," Barna Research Group, October 11, 2004)

-

When teens ages 13 to 19 were asked if they could have one wish granted, 48 percent wished for more time with their families. (The State of Our Nation's Youth, 2005-2006)

-

The choice of role models for 9th through 12th graders was their moms at 41 percent. Second place was their dads at 25 percent. No one else came even close. (The State of Our Nation's Youth, 2005-2006)

-

From the Time cover article about 13-year olds, their survey found that 53 percent of 13-year olds say they get along with their parents excellently. Fifty-three percent also say their parents are very involved in their lives knowing just about everything that goes on adding that 68 percent say that their parents have the right amount of involvement in their lives. (Time, August 8, 2005)

-

When asked about who is most influential about their personal decisions about sex, 37 percent said their parents were most influential. While that is not even 50 percent, parents did receive the highest percentage. Eighty-seven percent of teens believe it would be easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents. ("One Voice 2004: American's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy," The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004)

-

Fifty-two percent of teens in grades 6 to 12 believe that their parents are always supportive of them. Another 42 percent say they are usually supportive. (USA Weekend, April 27-29, 2001)

-

From Barna's oft-quoted Third Millennial Teens report, 78 percent of teens said their parents had a lot of influence over them. (Barna Research Group, 1999)

-

Read this entire Barna report: "New Barna Book Provides Insight Into Real Teens"

-

Read this entire Barna report: "Teens Evaluate the Church-Based Ministry They Received As Children"

-

Read this entire Barna report: "Parents Accept Responsibility for Their Child's Spiritual Development But Struggle With Effectiveness"

-

Read this entire Barna report: "Research Shows That Spiritual Maturity Process Should Start at a Young Age"

-

Read this entire Barna report: "Parents Describe How They Raise Their Children"

-

Read this entire Barna report: "Americans Agree: Kids Are Not Being Prepared for Life"

-

Here's a quote you can include everywhere possible. Joseph A. Califano, Jr., chairman and president of National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) made this powerful statement: ""There are no silver bullets-unfortunately, the tragedy of a child's substance abuse can strike any family; but one factor that does more to reduce teens' substance abuse risk than almost any other is parental engagement, and one of the simplest and most effective ways for parents to be engaged in their teens' lives is by having frequent family dinners. If I could wave a magic wand to make a dent in the substance abuse problem, I would make sure that every child in America had dinner with his or her parents at least five times a week. There is no more important thing a parent can do. Parental engagement in children's lives is the key to ridding our nation of the scourge of substance abuse. The nation's drug problem is all about kids. A child who gets through age 21 without smoking, abusing alcohol, or using illegal drugs is virtually certain never to do so. America's drug problem is not going to be solved in courtrooms, legislative hearing rooms or classrooms, by judges, politicians or teachers. It will be solved in living rooms and dining rooms and across kitchen tables--by parents and families." ("The

Importance of Family Dinners II," National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse/Nick at Nite's Family Table study)

According to this quote from Newsweek: "Research shows that most young people go through adolescence having good relationships with their parents, adopting attitudes and values consistent with their parents' and end up getting out of the adolescent period and becoming good citizens," says Richard Lerner, Bergstrom chair of applied developmental science at Tufts University. This shouldn't be news--but it is, largely because of widespread misunderstanding of what happens during the teen years. It's a time of transition, just like the first year of parenthood or menopause. And although there are dramatic hormonal and physical changes during this period, catastrophe is certainly not preordained. A lot depends on youngsters' innate natures combined with the emotional and social support they get from the adults around them. In other words, parents do matter."

"Many of the church leaders talk about the importance of the family, but in practice they have written off the family as an agency of spiritual influence. Their assumption is that if the family (including teenagers) is going to be influenced, it is the organized church that will do the influencing, primarily through its events--worship services, classes, special events, etc. This philosophy causes the impetus behind youth ministry to be fixing what is broken--that is, to substitute the efforts of the church for those of parents since most of the latter do not provide the spiritual direction and accountability that their children need. But there is a procedural problem here: kids take their cues from their family, not from their youth ministers. God's plan was for the church to support the family, and for the family to be the front-line of ministry within the home. Teenagers may glean some truths and principles from youth leaders, but the greatest influence in their lives will remain their parents." (George Barna, Third Millennial Teens)

"The roots of misconceptions about teenagers go back to the way psychologists framed the field of adolescent development a century ago. They were primarily looking for explanations of why things went wrong. Before long, the idea that this phase was a period of storm and stress made its way into the popular consciousness. But in the last 15 years, developmental scientists have begun to re-examine these assumptions. Instead of focusing on kids who battle their way through the teen years, they're studying the dynamics of success." (Barbara Kantrowitz and Karen Springen, Newsweek, April 25, 2005)

When asked "What surprised you most about this generation or challenged a stereotype you may have had before you started this project, "Generation Next?: Speak Up. Be Heard.": "Gen Nexters' relationship with their parents. Almost half of all young adults talk to their parents everyday on the telephone (not to mention email, text messaging and, for some, instant messaging). Young people today seem to have a much more open relationship with their parents than previous generations had. Marketers, employers, and Gen Nexters that I spoke to all seem to agree that the parent-child relationship has changed. This is a generation is characterized by "helicopter parents" who told their children to follow their dreams and that they could be whatever they wanted to be when they grew up." (Judy Woodruff, YPulse.com, January 2, 2007)

From a study of club goers for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 37 percent said their most important relationship is with their parents. The second choice was God at 25 percent. Friends came in third at 20 percent. Forty-five percent of the same teens also said that parents have the greatest influence on their decisions. Only 19 percent said their friends did. As a close third, teachers and respected adults came in at 14 percent. But neither of those came close to how important parents are in their influence. (Boys & Girls Clubs of America: Youth Report to America, 2006)

When asked "What surprised you most about this generation or challenged a stereotype you may have had before you started this project, "Generation Next?: Speak Up. Be Heard.": "Gen Nexters' relationship with their parents. Almost half of all young adults talk to their parents everyday on the telephone (not to mention email, text messaging and, for some, instant messaging). Young people today seem to have a much more open relationship with their parents than previous generations had. Marketers, employers, and Gen Nexters that I spoke to all seem to agree that the parent-child relationship has changed. This is a generation is characterized by "helicopter parents" who told their children to follow their dreams and that they could be whatever they wanted to be when they grew up." (Judy Woodruff, YPulse.com, January 2, 2007)

"First, the best way to get most youth more involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities. For decades in many religious traditions, the prevailing model of youth ministry has relied on pulling teens away from their parents. In some cases, youth ministers have come to see parents as adversaries. There is no doubt a time and place for unique teen settings and activities. Still, our findings suggest that overall youth ministry would probably best be pursued in a larger context of family ministry, that parents should be viewed as indispensable partners in the religious formation of youth." (Dr. Christian Smith, Soul

Shaping, p. 267)

-

From a two-phase study of six focus groups and a quantitative survey with over 1,500 young Americans, ages 13 to 24: "Millennials exhibit strong familial relationships and bonds. Seven in ten are "satisfied" with their family life three out of four place a high degree of importance on being close to their parents and siblings. Interestingly the oldest segment of young people, 22-24 year-olds, are most satisfied with their family life." ("The Millennial Values" online research study, The N press release, April 30, 2007)

-

Influencers are influenced by parents: From a survey of teens deemed "youth-fluentials," 86% of those teens who have influence over others say that their parents influence their day-to-day decisions. (Burston-Marsteller study 2007)