

TO DO OR NOT TO DO [values and behavior]

THIS WEEK

The adolescent years are when teenagers are questioning their values and beliefs the most. They watch TV, listen to the radio, surf the Internet, and hang out with friends—influences that shape their values and behaviors. No wonder it's challenging for some to shape Christian values and live them! This TalkSheet will help you discuss how to shape Christian values and live them day in and day out.

OPEN

Have your guys sit or stand together in a huge human knot. Have them lock their arms and legs. Then let the girls try to pull them apart. A few rules, though—no hitting, pinching, or kicking—only pulling. Give them a few minutes. Then, debrief with your group to talk about struggles. What was hard about trying to pull them apart? Was it hard for the guys to stick together when they were being pulled away? Did the girls want to give up? What made the guys stick together so tightly?

Point out that some people make choices and stick with them but can be pulled away from these values. Like the human knot, it's important to surround yourself with people who have the same values and can hold each other accountable.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. How did your kids rate themselves? Explain to the group that the longer a person's behavior is inconsistent with his beliefs, the more his beliefs will change to match his behavior.
2. The kids may describe feelings of guilt in answer to this exercise. Make certain they understand that guilt isn't always bad—it was designed by God to pull our behavior patterns in line with our value system. When we stop feeling guilty for the inconsistency in our lives, then we're in serious trouble.
3. If sharing the sentences is uncomfortable, pass out 3x5 cards and have them write their responses. Collect the cards and read them aloud for discussion. Brainstorm practical ways to change incompatible behavior patterns.
4. Discuss this tension-getter. Ask the group to rate Blake's actions on a scale of one (worst) to 10 (best). Most will choose a middle-of-the scale number. Point out that life is rarely divided into nice, safe categories where all our choices are obvious and easy to make—like a simple one or a 10. Sometimes they fall in the middle—the gray area—not clearly black or white. Ask them to describe similar situations they have experienced and what they did in each case.

5. Have the group look up each passage and allow the kids to evaluate where they stand on each one. If kids feel that they fall short of what God wants, help them to see that even a little improvement over time is better than no improvement at all.

THE CLOSE

Encourage your kids to think through their values and then try to live consistently with them. They need to walk their talk. You might choose a value everyone respects—such as loving our neighbors—and brainstorm a list of pertinent actions to be completed during the next week. Find methods of putting good values into consistent practice. The more frequently right choices are made, the easier they will be.

Encourage the kids to use the Bible for help and guidance. Suggest that they also ask parents and other Christians for advice when they are having difficulty making decisions. Let them know you yourself are anxious to help them, at any time.

MORE

- You may want to have your group search the Bible for stories of characters who struggled with decisions. A few of them include Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), Abraham (Genesis 12), Esau (Genesis 25:27), David (2 Samuel 11-12), and Matthew (Matthew 9:9). Ask your kids to study the way the situations were handled and how they were resolved. How did the characters' decisions affect their lives and the future of their families? How do these stories apply to the lives of your kids today?
- You may want to take some time to talk about values in the media. Make a list of values that your kids see on TV, in the movies, on the Internet, on the radio, etc. How do these values compare to the values Christians live by? In what ways do your kids face these values at school or at home? What can they do to resist these pressures? How much do your kids believe what they see and hear? Challenge them to keep their eyes open to contradicting values.