

UNPLUGGED – PARENTS
BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE FOR
PARENT MEETINGS.

Use this with the introduction and the
outlines of the units.



PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

In the last decades there has been a lot of evidence that parent's different behaviors and attitudes can be directly related to the drug use of the children in terms of protective and risk-factors (Brook J.S, et al, 1990; Petraitis J., et al, 1995; Steinberg L., et al, 1992; Mendes F., et al, 1999; Simons-Morton B., et al, 1999, Velleman R., et al, 2000).

Although the Eudap study did not find any specific influence of the parent component on the effectiveness of the pupil's behavior (there was a lack of proper evaluation of the effectiveness of the parent involvement), since there has been a lot of evidence in other studies supporting the necessity to involve parents in a drug prevention program for students, we decided to integrate the parent scenarios in the program material.

General objective of the program:

The general objective of the program is to increase the awareness of parents regarding family risk and protective factors, which are related to drug use in the early adolescence, and to encourage them to use an authoritative parenting-style. With this style we mean the integration of high control and positive encouragement of the child's autonomous and independent strivings. Such an approach needs a comforting and protecting attitude of parents, merged with acceptance and even encouragement of the child's own independent choices.

More specific aims:

- To inform parents on family's influence regarding the adolescent's substance use
- To help parents understand the changes their children undergo in terms of development and identity formation during their adolescence and to understand substance use in this frame
- To help parents to set clear rules in the family and enhance their negotiation skills
- To sensitize parents in strategies that would increase family attachment

The parent program includes:

- 3 Parent evenings at the same school (with the frequency once a month)
- Information delivered through a leaflet sent to all parents of the target group

Structure of the intervention:

The following intervention is addressed to the parents of the students participating to Unplugged. Of course there is no reason to exclude other parents from the same school or from the neighborhood. Taking into account the experience of many specialists, the attendance of parents to group settings is very low; (it is estimated that the percentage of parents participating to group offers is no more than 20% of those who have been addressed by the program). On these grounds, this program for parents does not include parent –groups, but it is structured in three open discussions with different topics.

Parents will be invited to each meeting separately, in order to increase their participation, while the information delivered and the topics of discussion of each meeting will be disseminated afterwards through a leaflet to all the parents who are

the target group. There will be an effort to find “volunteers” parents who will help in summarizing the discussion and write it down in the leaflet.

Each parent evening is structured in:

- a. Opening activity
- b. Lecture
- c. Discussion in the plenary
- d. Work in small groups
- e. Role-play or dramatization
- f. Closing

Some comments on the proposed methodology:

There is a lot of evidence that using interactive methods in prevention programs heightens the effectiveness of them. “Prevention programs are most effective when they employ interactive techniques, such as peer discussion, groups and parent role-playing, that allow for active involvement in learning about abuse and reinforcing skills” (Prevention Principle 15, National Institute on Drug Use 2003).

Nevertheless, taking into account that in some cultures the active involvement of the participants might cause discomfort or irritation in the audience, it is in the trainer’s decision to modify the instructions concerning the particular group of parents. In this sense, the trainer could use the scenarios of the role-plays and discuss them with the parents, instead of dramatize them or discuss the topics of the work in small groups in the plenary.

The leaflet for the parents will include:

1. A summary of the lecture
2. A short description of the main topics being discussed in the meeting
3. Book references for parents

Duration of each meeting: 3 hours

For each school there are 3 parent evenings designed (once a month -parallel with the intervention for the students) on the following topics:

1. Understanding better the teenagers
Issues: Information about psychological and social characteristics of adolescence – Information on drugs - Substance use as part of the experimental risk-behavior of teenagers – the influence and role of family functioning during this developmental stage
2. Parenting a teenager means growing up together
Issues: Autonomy process and identity acquisition of teenagers – the generation conflict and the necessary development of the family – parental assertiveness
3. A good relationship with my child also means setting up rules and limits
Issues: Authority without being authoritarian – monitoring without

repressing – negotiating without losing power – setting clear limits in the family about substance use

Tasks for the program leader:

- ✓ to invite parents to each meeting
- ✓ to perform each meeting with the defined aims, structure and methodology
- ✓ to produce a leaflet for each meeting and disseminate it to parents
- ✓ to evaluate each meeting

1. Understanding better teenagers

Objectives:

- To help parents understand the changes their children undergo in terms of development and identity formation during adolescence and to understand substance use in this frame
- To sensitize parents about the preventive impact the family can have regarding the adolescent's substance use

Opening (30')

- Introduction of the leader and the group -members
- Introduction into the objectives of Unplugged and the program for parents
- Defining the objective of this meeting (Finding "volunteers" for the leaflet)
- Brainstorming: "What makes it difficult to parent teenagers?"
(Possible resume: children at this stage are changing in an unpredictable way)

Lecture: (20')

- Lets see how it feels like to be a 12-13 years old teenager and what tasks young people have to fulfill during their adolescence

Development during early adolescence

Adolescence is often described as a transitional stage of life, where the "transition" from childhood to adulthood is accomplished.

Nevertheless, it is also often described as a "difficult" stage, a time when the ability of the family to adjust to changes or to change, is challenged.

Often parents are faced with doubts whether they can still influence the development of their children.

Adolescence as a time period usually begins at the age of 11 or 12 (some would say 13 or 14 years old) and it is defined by enormous changes in many areas of the child's development:

- Physical changes (the shape and the function of the body changes)
- Crucial changes concerning the personality – Identity formation
- Changes concerning sociability (peer groups become important social group)
- Enormous achievements in logical thinking (gradually abstract thinking is accomplished)
- Differentiation of their moral judgement
- Formulation of the personal value system

The general developmental tasks an adolescent has gradually to fulfill until adulthood are:

- To get familiar with his/her body changes and to accept his/her body as a part of him/herself
- To understand and cope with his/her emotions
- To gain a balanced self-image and a stable identity which will allow him/her to be a person who can adjust easily to the roles played as a member of society, as a member of different groups within that society, with individuals, and with one special individual

- While moving from one role to another, adolescents will need the skills to think creative, to be spontaneous (to find novel solutions to familiar situations) and also to be ready to experiment in new sometimes unknown areas.
- To become independent while defining his/her role in the family with new perspectives
- To be able to think abstract and to see things from another person's point of view
- To formulate his/her personal values and his/her "attitude towards life"

There is no doubt that the basis of many of these developmental tasks is set in previous stages of the child's development. Nevertheless, adolescence is a period of change and an opportunity for parents to influence their children in a decisive way. Whatever the level of competence and self-esteem of a young person moving into adolescence is, that level will either increase or decrease over the adolescent period, depending on the encouragement or the rejection encountered as the child tries to cope with the enormous changes that are occurring in and around him or her.

Teenagers at the age of 12 - 13 are usually in the first stage of adolescence. This stage is considered as an overlap stage between childhood and adolescence. Most parents and teachers are very familiar with the fact, that at this age, children very often change their behavior unexpectedly from "mature" into "childish" and vice-versa.

More specific characteristics of this age are:

- Physical changes are very important – there is a great variety in the changes teenagers experience in their body and there are often big differences in their development.
- Physical differences as well, are often manifested in differences of behavior. The fragile self-esteem a young person may have is very much influenced by their body image.
- It is a deeply emotional period. The release of hormones result in deeply felt emotions that influence, and often control, the behavior of a teenager (typical sudden mood changes). It is also a time where the loss of childhood might cause grief.
- Teenagers come to the realization that they are unique individuals and that they have to find their new role in their family as well as in the society as a whole. Often at this age children move from elementary school into a higher education level, which reinforces their need of defining a new role for themselves (more independent but also facing more obligations).
- Sexual fantasies and unfamiliar feelings toward people of both sexes often confuse the young person.
- It is a period of time where self-awareness is heightened and teenagers are very self-centered but still have a vague self-image.
- They often feel "different", "lonely" or "not being understood" by others especially by his/her family (fantasies about being adopted).
- His/her basic way of solving problems could be aggressive, submissive or co-operative. Their behavior depends on the way she/he has been treated by

others, the example set to him/her by them, or it may also be temporary defense to the uncertainty of unfamiliar thoughts and feelings.

- During this stage many teenagers have fixed ideas on how things should be done and they tend to believe there is only one right way to do things while at the same time their ability of logical thinking is increased (this can result in endless arguing and supporting a singular view of life). Until their ability of abstract thinking is developed they are not able to see things from the other person's point of view or be concerned about how other people feel about their actions.
- Moreover, concerning the abilities of logical thinking at this stage, teenagers think mainly in regards to the immediate past and present and therefore are not able to make long-term planning or take consequences into consideration while they are acting (they also tend to ask for immediate need gratification).
- During this period of time, a very important change occurs and that is the breaking away process from the family. Teenagers still rely very much to external control and authority but may refuse to accept it from their parents. Peer groups become important and may also substitute parents in their role of providing security and guidance.
- Misbehavior at this stage seems similar to infantile misbehavior: teenager stick to rules only as far as they are not caught in breaking them. Lying becomes part of their lives, and time limits are constantly bargained. Having an untidy room, ignoring chores around the house, smoking, drinking, and staying out late can be an unfortunate expression of their effort to challenge parents as authority figures and to become independent.

“The adolescent's limited ability to see far into the future and the reliance on the people and things present ‘now’ for self-esteem may lead them into all sorts of dangerous activities” (Myers B, 1996)

Discussion in the plenary (15’):

Clarifying questions and comments on the lecture

Work in small groups: (15’)

- **TASK:** Discuss in the groups
“How many teenagers at this age group do you believe use drugs? Distinguish legal from illegal drugs and also distinguish lifetime use from last month use.”
(Maybe an empty statistical graphic to color in, is an easy and funny way to do this)

“What makes children during adolescence more vulnerable to drug use?”

Summing up: (30’)

- **Summarizing**
- **Presenting statistical data of drug use at this age group**
- **Presenting: Why are adolescents vulnerable to substance use.**

“Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the untoward effects to drug use because of the transitional and fluctuating nature of their emotions, defense

mechanism, and personality as a whole during this phase of life.” (Brook J.S. et al, 1990, p.117)

Also:

- Teenagers strive for independency and tend to ignore advices from older generations
- Peer approval becomes as important as parental approval
- The positive effect of many drugs (to relieve anxiety or produce a sense of euphoria) may be a temporarily relief for the anxiety teenagers often feel
- Teenagers lack on life experiences and are still immature where their judgment is concerned.
- Experimenting is an intrinsic part of child development
- Teenagers are the most popular target group for advertisements with the main message: “Feel quickly intense” –“Consume ...and you will be part of a group/ you will have an Identity”

COFFEE - BREAK (10’)

Role-play / dramatization (15’)

A group of parents plays out a scenario where a teenager very happily is preparing himself /herself to go to a party and the parents (both at home) are anxious about letting him /her out. They try to give him /her last minute advices.

Discussion in the plenary (20’)

Reflecting about:

- How do the parents feel in this situation?
- What are parents expected to do in situations like these?
- What advice would they give to those parents?

Presenting (10’)

Research evidence about parental regulation and children’s drug related behavior (Brook J.S. et al, 1990; Mendes F. et al 1999, Velleman R. et al 2000):

- ⊙ Drug use during adolescence can be directly related to the parenting style.. Positive rephrased: The parents influence at this age of their children is still of high importance. Parents often underestimate the extent of their own influence, believing peer influence to be the decisive factor in their child’s drug related behavior.
- ⊙ Mutual parent-child attachment, parental support, encouragement and supervision involving clear rules as well, in a conflict-free family environment, are necessary conditions for a healthy development and critical for preventing drug use. The parents’ presence close to their children is perhaps more important during this period than in childhood

“The effectiveness of the attachment relationship in promoting less drug use may be explained by the presence of following factors:(a) parental warmth, with makes the parent important to the child and obviates the need for severe forms of discipline; (b) parental models of controlled behavior for the youngster; (c) a conflict-free relationship, which results in less frustration, aggression, and need to

rebel; and (d) the youngsters greater identification with the parent, resulting in the incorporation of parental values and behavior.” (Brook J. S. et al, 1990, p. 229)

- ⊙ Another important point concerning the family risk factors is the parental risk attitudes towards risk and antisocial behaviors of their children. Parental attitudes favorable to drug use and to antisocial behavior (e.g. misbehavior at school, staying out late etc), has been identified as a constant risk factor associated with all substances uses (Mendes F, et al, 1999).
- ⊙ Also, teenagers appreciated their parents for taking part in drug prevention programs and have more confidence in what their parents say, feeling that this would affect their own drug related decisions (Velleman R. et al, 2000). While communicating with their children on this topic, it is important that parents have accurate knowledge about drugs. Therefore it seems very useful for parents to have the same information on drugs as their children receive during a drug prevention program.

Closing (15')

How do parents feel with this information /what have they learnt today about their children and about themselves?

Fulfill these phrases:

- One thing I've learnt this evening is....
- What I didn't expect was...
- A word describing one feeling I had is ...

Discuss what you have written down with your neighbor (2 or maximally 3 persons) and mark one answer that you will explain to the others.

2. Parenting a teenager means growing up together

Objectives:

- To help parents understand the necessary changes the family undergoes during adolescence
- To sensitize parents in strategies which increases family attachment

Opening: (20')

- Feedback from last meeting – summarizing information for new comers if needed
- Introducing the issues of today's meeting
- Brainstorming:
“How do parents feel when their child becomes a teenager?”

Lecture: (15')

“Lets see what changes the family undergoes while the children develop and become teenagers”

Families with Adolescent children

As we have already emphasized in the last parent meeting, adolescence is a time when many changes considering the child's development are emerging and many parents have difficulties in handling the new situation.

We have also stressed, that in spite of the fact that teenagers begin to seek for a group outside the family in order to belong to, their family still has a crucial role and will influence their behavior and their decisions.

In our effort to find constructive ways to solve the typical conflicts for this period of time, it might be useful to focus on the main issues arising in the parent – children relationship during the stage of adolescence.

During the physical maturity and the development of new capacities, the young person begins a process where the need of independency and autonomy is central. Teenagers at the age of 12 or 13 begin to look for venture outside the family patterns, without however cutting the family ties and support. To strive for independency and autonomy is a necessary process in the development of the child and a presupposition for the adulthood.

The capacity to fulfill one's one basic need and to achieve self-control also implies responsibilities for one's own decisions and opinions. Parents often complain that their teenagers declare that they are old enough to be independent, while still behaving childish and irresponsible from an adult's point of view.

It is important to remember that we are talking about a long process of mutual growth, where children are learning to take on the responsibility and the consequences of their decisions and their behavior and the parents are learning gradually to give over their authority and to trust them to be autonomous.

Parents play an important role in this process by allowing the adolescent to express his/her own opinion without renouncing their own ideas and values (this is an

extremely important task) and also by favoring what we may call “coaching” of adolescent’s autonomy. This happens when parents encourage their children to express their own thoughts and feelings and when they stimulate them to consider other aspects of life and points of view (Mendes F. et al, 1999).

Nowadays, parents have also to take into account that their children have access on much more information than they probably do (e.g. through internet) and are influenced by many factors were parents have no control (e.g. SMS –chatting). Nevertheless, while children might have an increased ability to seek and find information, it is still the parents who will guide them in how to evaluate the information and how to choose what is the most suitable for them.

Autonomy has to be gradually granted inside the family (participating in family decisions, respecting the teenager’s opinions and judgements) as well as in the “outside world” (in the choice of friends or the way the teenager spends his/her money).

It is inevitable that during this process there will arise dissension and conflict. Although there might be an agreement between parents and teenagers about the need of children’s autonomy, it is expected that a divergence of opinions will emerge concerning the areas of freedom and self–control as well in the timing. Teenagers usually want to control their friends and their social life, while parents complain that teenagers show self-control when it comes to their school obligations. Parents may acknowledge that their children are old enough to stay out longer but will remain in believing that it is to “early” for them to be so independent.

It is important to recognize that while the teenagers are seeking for freedom and are trying to become autonomous, parents are also going through a process of individual autonomy rediscovery and redefinition. Most parents spend many years of their life almost exclusively on taking care of their children and are not familiar with the idea that children will eventually “leave” them and that they will need to redefine their role towards their children, their partners and also in their social life.

Along with these developments, many parents undergo a phase known as the ‘middle-age crisis’, similar with their children where they re-think their values and their way of living their lives. The intense issues and conflicts that might arise during this crisis for the parents (Has my career been important? To whom am I married all these years? Do I now have to nurse my own parents?), increase the negotiation difficulties with the teenager and make then unable to perform the necessary dialogue, the stability and firmness the elders should.

Another factor, which contributes to the difficulties in the parent – children relationship during adolescence, is the disidealisation of the parents by the teenagers. The increasing self-confidence of the adolescent leads him/her (especially at the early stage of adolescence) to a sense of “omnipotence”. “From my parents are the best, they know everything, the adolescent gets into ‘I know everything’. Only later he/she will be able to accept the relativity of knowledge” (Mendes F. et al, 1999).

The above-illustrated stress sources that parents are exposed to might contribute to a loss of the parent's self-esteem and provoke a feeling of helplessness. In order for the family to develop and for the adolescent to mature, it is important that parents acknowledge their own feelings of being frustrated and rejected and learn how to cope with the loss of the love, admiration and authority they have been experiencing in the previous stage of their child's development.

The children's adolescence may be the necessary impulse to the family's life renewal. This happens by an equivalent process of both parental and child autonomy, which necessarily implies profits and losses on both sides. The differences between generations that coexist inside the family should not be denied; on the contrary, they are fundamental to the development and the continuous progress of the family's system because of the capacity of acceptance and negotiation that they provoke. On the other hand the adolescents are neither ungovernable "monsters" nor "poor things" and their parents are not their victims nor their executioners nor, even less, their "builders" (Satir V, 1991 cited in Mendes F. et al, 1999).

While the children are moving into a period of confusion and mixed feelings, parents need to be firm, assertive and supportive. Even though, it is in the difference of opinions and in the disagreements with their parents, in which gradually teenagers build their own identity and autonomy, the presence of clear limits and rules are the necessary conditions that allow adolescents to evaluate in a safe place, whether their convictions and their choices are correct and acceptable.

In other words, teenagers need their parents to be assertive and close to them while they are moving outside the family's barriers. Like an infant child while making his/her first step towards other people is looking behind in order to be sure that his/her mother is present, teenagers also need a strong emotional bond with their family in order to move into their independency. Therefore, adolescence is a time for careful and firm parenting not for arguing and fighting.

Discussion in the plenary (15'):

Clarifying questions and comments on the lecture

Work in small groups: (15')

- TASK: Discuss in the groups
"How could parents deal with the changes in the family roles. What are the positive effects of adolescence in their life?"

Summing up: (15')

- Summarize what each group presents. Encourage positive strategies – commend of negative.

COFFEE – BREAK (10')

Role-play /dramatization (60')

Issue: Autonomy inside the family and outside the family

A group of parents plays out a scenario where there is a discussion about the summer vacation planning where parents are trying to respect their teenager's opinion and wishes.

Another group of parents plays out a scenario where there is a discussion about the teenager's friends where parents are expressing their reservations about them but are trying not to insult the teenager and not to argue with him/her. (The friends are older and the parents believe that they are using drugs)

In both dramatizations the plenary is asked to give their opinion about

- (a) How does the teenager feel?
- (b) How does the mother feel?
- (c) How does the father feel?
- (d) What do they believe will be the outcome of these discussions to the family life?
- (e) What advices would they give to the parents of this family?

Summing up (15')

- Focus on the need for emotional bond in the family as a protective factor for the adolescent
- Discuss possible situations where family attachment can be strengthened

Closing (15')

How do parents feel with this information /what have they learnt today about their children and about themselves?

Fulfill these phrases:

- One thing I've learnt this evening is....
- What I didn't expect was...
- A word describing one feeling I had is ...

Discuss what you have written down with your neighbor (2 or maximally 3 persons) and mark one answer that you will explain to the others.

3. A good relationship with my child also means setting up rules and limits

Objectives:

- To discuss with parents about the different parenting style
- To encourage parents to be firm and assertive in setting up rules and limits
- To help parents to set clear rules in the family and enhance their negotiation skills

Opening: (30')

- Feedback from last meeting – summarizing information for new comers if needed
 - Introducing in the issues of today's meeting
 - Brainstorming:
 - “What are we wanting to achieve concerning our child's development when we are parenting a teenager”
 - “How would you describe a good enough parent?”
- (Summing up: Most parents want the best for the children. There is no ideal parent but there are parenting styles, which are more helpful to the children regarding their development into responsible and autonomous young people)

Lecture: (20')

Let's see the most common strategies parents use in their relationships with their children and what possible effects those have, on the behavior of the teenager.

Parenting styles

As we have already pointed out in our previous meetings, during adolescence the relationship between parents and children changes dramatically and a new balance must be found, concerning the authority and the power parents have over their teenager.

Nevertheless, during this period of time, parents still have a decisive influence on their child's development. The parenting and discipline style they use in dealing with the independence striving of the teenager and the conflicts aroused, has immediate impact on the behavior and the choices of the young person.

It is important to notice, that by examining the different parenting styles it is not in our intention to blame or to implicate parents. In their effort to define the way they should treat their children, parents are mostly relying to the methods they have “inherited” from their parents and their own experience. Sometimes it becomes a central issue for them, not to repeat the mistakes their parents have done. Any attempt therefore to accuse parents for the beliefs they have about parenting would have to include all the previous generation as well.

Furthermore, parents have been also confused in the last decades by the contradiction of advices by experts. They might have been grown up in a time, where the main direction concerning discipline methods, punishment and reward was, in order for children to become responsible persons, while in the next years the parents were encouraged to let their children freely express themselves without any restrictions.

It is obvious that all the above have influenced the credibility of theories on parenting styles. But it is also important to take into account, that the values and the ideas concerning the parental methods, are reflecting also the values and ideas of the society we are living in.

Nowadays children are being taught their rights, and democracy and equality are part of their vocabulary. At the same time the need for self-control and of limits in need gratification are also emerging as presumptions for a fair society and a healthy future. Parents need to adjust their values and beliefs to the changes occurring in the world outside their family and in some cases they might need to redefine their ideas about the parenting style they use.

Making an effort to describe ineffective discipline methods, inevitably leads to generalizations and maybe simplifications.

Nevertheless, we could define two general styles of disciplines, which do not enhance the child's responsible and independent behavior: extreme repression or absolute permissiveness.

Parenting a teenager can be described a process of changes and mutual growth. The active presence and the closeness parents have in their relationship to their children is even considered as more important than in any other stage of child development. The role of parents at this stage is described as "to be attentive, to mobilize without directing, to support them when they fail and to praise them when they succeed" (Sampaio, 1994:42, cited in Mendes F. et al, 1999). This parenting style can also be described as the "coaching" of the teenagers in his/her individuation process.

This parenting role also implies that teenagers have the opportunity to take on responsibility for his/her own behavior and to experience the positive or negative consequences of his/her choices.

It is important that parents give children the opportunity to make mistakes, to experience failure as well as success, to learn to cope with the frustration if their wishes are not fulfilled or if they have to wait until they get what they want.

If parents are putting all their needs away in order to give 'everything' to the children they might become 'overprotective' and restrict the teenagers ability to manage difficulties and to control themselves.

If parents are extremely permissive and don't put up rules in the family, their teenagers will be unable to adjust their behavior to external restrictions and rules.

By not being assertive and firm while negotiating with the teenager, parents do not help a child develop an awareness of the value of rules for living by depriving the child of the necessity to make provision for the needs of others, thereby depriving the child of the necessary conditions which helps develop moral judgment.

Similarly, if teenagers are faced with an excess of control or repression by their parents they will be unable to adjust their behavior to rules and limits and to be independent since they will be either fighting excessively against the strict rules or be totally external controlled.

According to studies regarding the effects of parenting styles in different cultures (Mendes F. et al, 1999) the more parents discuss and share their decisions with their

children the more the latter are motivated to take initiatives, have a feeling of independence, liberty, self esteem and the predominance of an inner control locus. It has been also verified that the permissive style results in a behavior escalation that, in short time will be out of parent's control and that expresses itself in parent rejection and anti-social behavior. In the same line is the research evidence found by Mendes F. et al 1999, that parental risk attitudes towards discipline and anti-social behaviors (e.g. not having clear rules about alcohol and drug use; tolerate substance use and destructive behaviors by their child) and is considered as family risk factor associated with all substance uses.

During adolescence parents are asked to be firm. Instead of denying their parental authority they have to learn how to adjust it and how to use it flexibly and appropriate to the situation. "If parents accept that the fight is necessary for their children's well-being they will draw them firm frontiers and they will offer them something to fight against." (Skinner R. & Cleese J.,1990: 261-262). But of course these frontiers have to be built down gradually because as children grow up and become more independent they need to have more space.

It is important not to confuse conviction firmness with repression or excessive control. Parents might want to control their teenager acts but that does not necessarily mean that they don't respect their decision capacity.

However expressions like "You have to do it because I say so" or "You are much too young to know what is best for you" should be avoided. A proposal for formulation would be: "Tell me about your own experiences and tell me why you think I am wrong."

It is helpful for teenagers to be aware of the limits set by their parents but also to have the opportunity to negotiate the rules that might need to be set up (regarding home or school work, time of coming home etc).

Some important issues while setting up rules in the family are:

- Try to involve teenager in the rules setting and in defining what consequences breaking those rules should have.
- Separate important aspects of having control from non-important.
- Separate non-negotiable rules from rules which can be discussed
- Define areas of independency for the teenager (clothes, room etc).
- Be clear and firm in reminding the agreed rules.
- Be aware of your own attitudes, limits and expectations
- Try to "practice what you preach".

Teenagers, especially at the age of 12-13 might have great difficulties to follow what has been agreed. Keeping in mind that in this developmental phase they are mostly influenced by the here and now, it is understandable that they tend to respond to the immediate situation (a friend wants to confide a secret to me after school) than to the agreed one (I have to go home immediately after school or else let my parent know that I'm late). Understanding the behavior does not mean that it has to be accepted, but it allows parents to be gentler when correcting the behavior.

As Bob Myers (1996: 84) points out "My experience with rebellious teenagers over the years has taught me that the more control we try to have over a child, the less influence we have on child's behavior. The more control we have over our parenting the more influence we have on the behavior of the child."

Discussion in the plenary (10’):

Clarifying questions and comments on the lecture

Work in small groups: (20’)

TASK:

“Make a list of 5 –10 situations in your relationship with your children which cause or could cause dispute at home. Separate the negotiable situations from the non-negotiable. Define clear limits for the latter ones (I do not accept it when my child is taking drugs!) and think of acceptable rules about the former ones.”

Summing up: (40’)

(a) Summarize what each group presents.

(b) Discuss about some general guidelines for negotiation:

- *Boundaries, limits and rules, negotiated by parents and children, allow children to make decisions, feel safe and free, and learn to be cooperative and responsible.*
- *Externalize the rules (Separating the person from the problem): Rules are solutions to past problems, solutions that can be discussed and if necessary changed into new rules. Rules are the responsibility of everyone who contributes to them, not only the parent’s.*
- *Rules have to respect everybody’s needs implied: It is not about compromising the different demands (parent’s and teenager’s) but about finding solutions that will take into account the needs of all parties.*
- *Parents need to have a back-up position if the child refuses to negotiate or the negotiation fails*
- *Be assertive (respect everyone’s right for safety and fair go)*
- *It is your right and duty as a parent to say NO.*

(c) Breaking the rules: what can parents do?

- Introduce to the concept of logical or social consequences as an alternative method to deal with teenagers misbehavior

Important:

- *That the consequences imposed to the misbehavior of the teenager are actual logical.*
- *That the teenager has some control on the consequences (there has been an agreement about it and if children modify their behavior the consequences will change as well)*
- *Parents need to be firm and consequent in imposing consequences to their child*
- *When parents try to pass on values and beliefs to children it is important that “that they behave as they preach”.*
- *Parents can try to convince a teenager to co-operate and to change his/her behavior by explaining how they feel about this behavior and what consequence it has on them.*

- *Also, parents can use co-operation as a method of discipline by their non-co-operation if teenagers break the agreements.*
- *Parents have to keep in mind, that the aim of all the discipline methods is to raise responsible teenagers.*

COFFEE – BREAK (10')

Exercise: Learn how to say NO (10')

Divide people into two groups A and B.

A-group has a request (like “can you give me money”) and B-group has to say NO in a firm but gentle way. Ask them to walk around and practice saying NO to as much people as possible. Reverse roles between the groups after a few minutes.

Get feedback about how it felt to say NO.

Role-play /Dramatization (30')

Choose a dispute situation (or two if there is enough time) between parents and teenagers from the described ones that are including drug consume. Pick up volunteers who are willing to play this situation out. Let them present the scene they have chosen. After the situation is played out, ask them to freeze like a picture and ask the plenary: Why do they think everybody is behaving they way he/she is? How do they feel in this situation? What would they consult this family to do?

Closing (15')

How do parents feel with this information /what have they learnt today about their children and about themselves?

Fulfill these phrases:

- One thing I've learnt this evening is....
- What I didn't expect was...
- A word describing one feeling I had is ...

Discuss what you have written down with your neighbor (2 or maximally 3 persons) and mark one answer that you will explain to the others.

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