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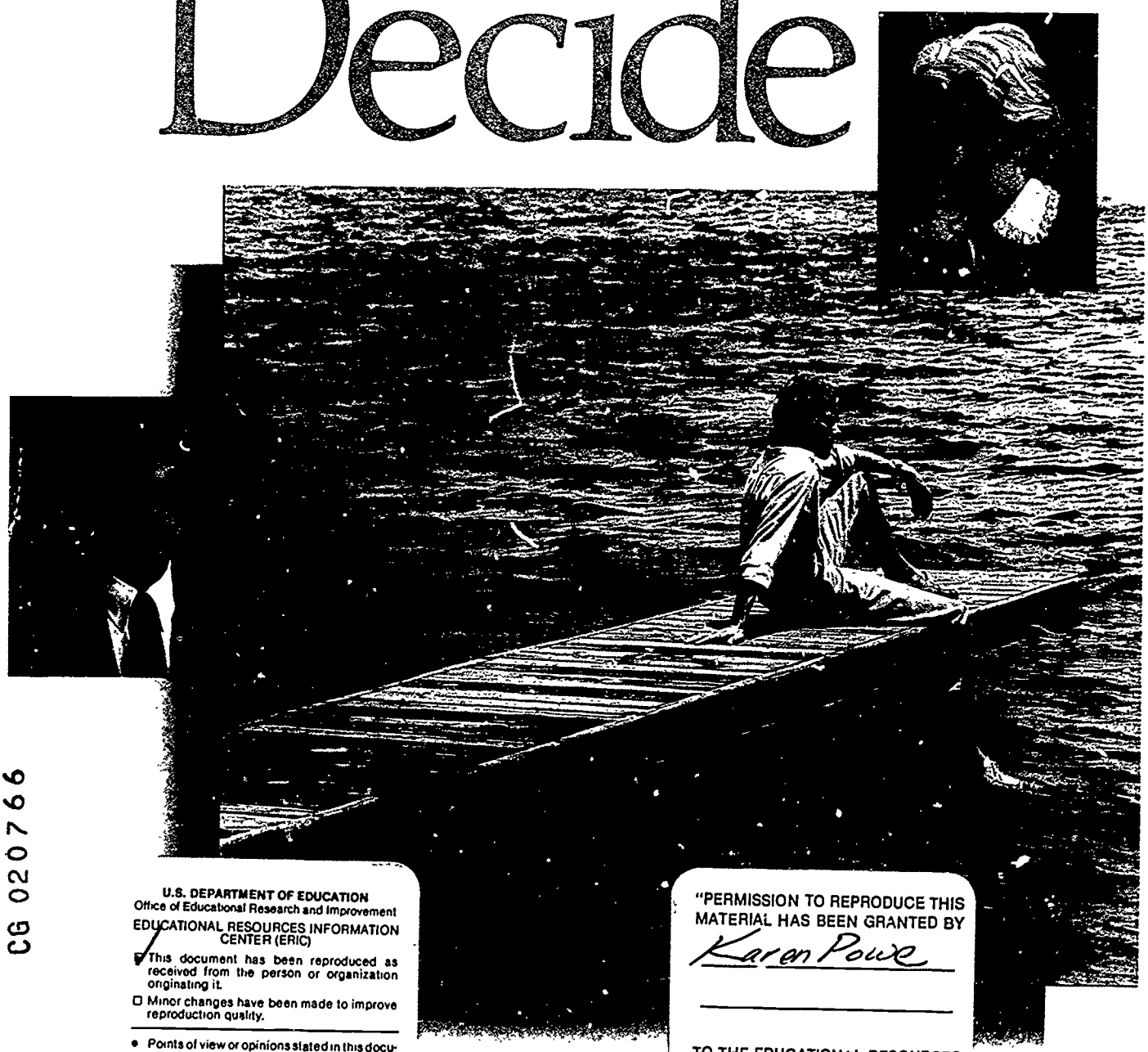
ABSTRACT

This guide was written to help parents of adolescents establish effective parent-child communication and help their children learn to make sound decisions. It is divided into three parts. Part 1, Growing Pains, discusses what parents and children might go through during the adolescent years and explains the developmental tasks of adolescence. Part 2, How to Help, suggests ways that parents can use to develop more open lines of communication with their teenagers and to guide them in decision making. A section on how not to communicate gives examples of typical responses parents may have to an adolescent which can be classified as threatening, preaching, blaming, analyzing, pacifying, probing, and avoiding. Possible reactions of adolescents to these types of responses are explored. Suggestions are given for how parents can become better listeners. Parents are encouraged to be attentive, encourage talk, try to empathize, and listen with respect. In talking to adolescents, parents are encouraged to show respect, be brief, be aware of one's tone of voice, and be specific. Eight steps are presented which parents can use to teach responsible decision making. Part 3, Homework for You Both, includes materials designed to help parents implement the ideas presented in the guide. Samples of the youth and parent questionnaires are included. (NB)

# Helping Youth Decide







A program for parents developed by the National Association of State Boards of Education

The 600 citizen volunteer members of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) provide policy-making leadership to public education in the United States. Their efforts are designed to assure quality education to every child in every classroom in the states and territories.

As education leaders, state board members recognize that a partnership exists among schools, parents and communities. This publication is an example of two of these, education and business, reaching out to the third, parents.

NASBE is proud of *Helping Youth Decide.* We believe the booklet meets a crucial need of parents. We have received hundreds of letters of thanks from parents, education and social welfare professionals and others who have found it useful and instructive.

A half million copies of the first, 1984, edition have been distributed, on request, to individuals and groups. A Spanish version, *Decidiendo Juntos,* is also available from NASBE.

We hope that parents who use these guides will find them useful in establishing effective parent-child communication and in helping children learn to make sound decisions. NASBE believes that sound communication and decision-making skills are critical to every child's journey toward responsible adulthood.

January 1986
Second Edition

Phyllis Blaunstein
Executive Director
National Association of
State Boards of Education

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*Publication and free distribution of* Helping Youth Decide *was made possible by The Tobacco Institute, Washington, D.C., an association of cigarette manufacturers who as a matter of longtime policy and practice believe that young people should not smoke. It is the Institute's hope that this booklet will help parents deal with the full range of decisions adolescents face today.*

# Introduction

Child raising has been a subject of debate among adults as long as there have been children. Almost every parent has opinions, or has heard theories about one of the most tenuous and difficult of family relationships: that between parent and adolescent.

You've probably said it yourself a hundred times. And you're right. Raising an adolescent is hard on the parent. But adolescence can be even more difficult for the youngster, who is trying to make the transition to young adulthood and is not quite sure how to handle it.

This is the time when your young teenager will be faced with many new decisions. Some decisions will be small, others important. Consider the following examples: how to dress . . . whom to choose as friends . . . whether to quit school . . . go to college . . . when to begin dating . . . whether to take a job.

Making responsible decisions is a skill that is best learned with the help of someone more experienced. With adult help, youngsters are more likely to make good choices.

Shared decision making begins with good communication between parent and child. Good communication skills help to strengthen the mutual respect and trust in the family. It is the objective of this booklet to help family members better understand each other, talk more easily and effectively to each other, and make more responsible decisions that are more agreeable to both parent and child.

This booklet is divided into three parts. Part I discusses what's involved for you and your child during the adolescent years. Part II suggests ways to develop more open lines of communication with your teenagers and to guide them in decision making. Part III includes materials designed to help you implement the ideas presented in the preceding sections—some "homework" for parent and child.

# Part 1
# Growing Pains

Mark Twain wrote that at age 17 he thought his father the most ignorant man who ever lived, but at age 21 he was amazed at how much the old man had learned in four short years.

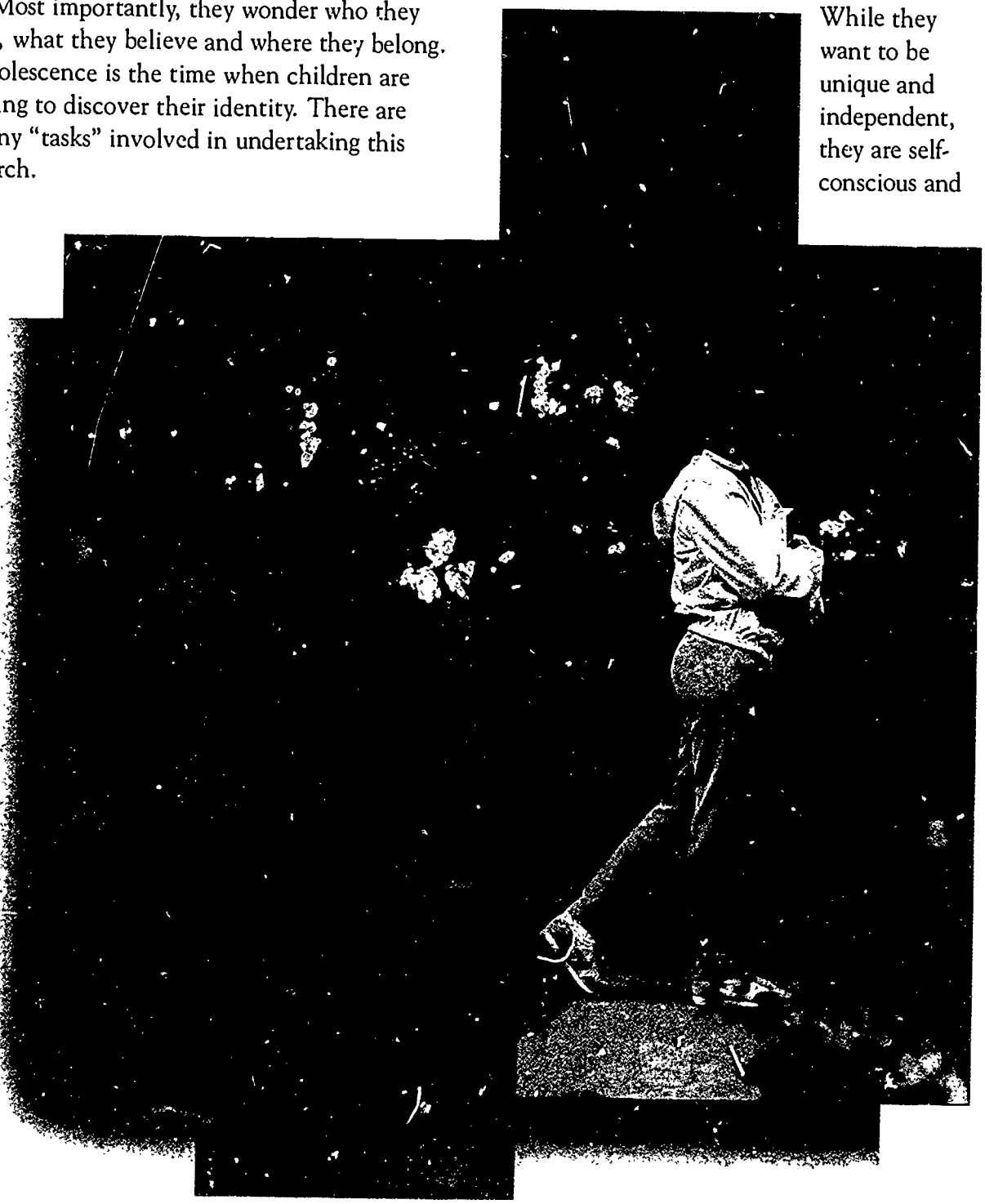
What we call the generation gap isn't anything new. Throughout history, teenagers—no longer children, but not yet adults—have questioned the rules laid down by their parents and by society.

Questioning authority, testing the rules and experimenting with adult behaviors are all a natural part of adolescent growth. Youngsters want freedom, yet freedom is frightening. There are new feelings to contend with. Biological and emotional changes are taking place within that young teens do not fully understand.

Most importantly, they wonder who they are, what they believe and where they belong. Adolescence is the time when children are trying to discover their identity. There are many "tasks" involved in undertaking this search.

For the first time, young persons are beginning to look toward the future and to try to fit it with the past and present. They often have great dreams and become very idealistic. This hopefulness is one way they begin to feel some control over their destiny.

Young teenagers are trying to arrive at a clear sense of their own feelings and beliefs. While they want to be unique and independent, they are self-conscious and



afraid of being "different." As a result, young teens often dress and act like their friends, the sense of security thus attained allowing them to search for and test new and different beliefs and behaviors.

Adolescence is a time of experimenting and testing. Young people try out different behaviors and take risks and learn from reactions of family and friends. Thus they find out what their abilities, interests and responsibilities are.

Teenagers are also facing the eventuality of leaving home and joining a working society. They must mesh their interests, skills, and talents with the duties, jobs and roles available to them. They often feel a sense of inadequacy and may underestimate themselves. They need to experiment and compete in work and play to discover where they fit in.

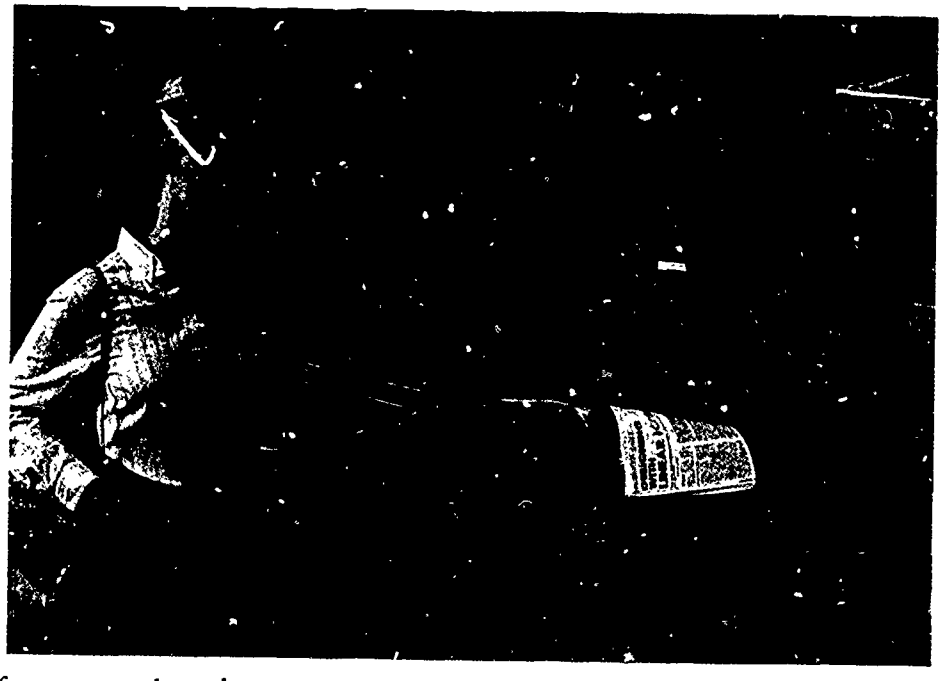
As young people become more sure of who they are and more confident of themselves, they can begin to share more of their hopes and fears with others, especially their peers. It is normal for adolescents to begin shifting some of their


emotional dependency from their parents to their friends.

They will also begin to define more clearly their relationships with others. Whom they will follow and whom they will lead become important decisions. By beginning to develop a responsibility toward younger friends and neighbors they are preparing for the adult role of guiding and teaching others.

Finally, adolescents are beginning to narrow and deepen their interests. Instead of a passing interest in many things, they begin to develop a deeper interest in a few ideas and activities.

Young people are undertaking a search for their identity within a confusing array of choices and challenges. Their world is no longer the grade-schooler's simple and secure environment, protected by parents and teachers.



In junior and senior high school, teachers are more challenging and the subjects more difficult. There's more competition for the attention and approval of classmates . . . increased expectations of parents and teachers . . . new extracurricular activities.

In earlier times, the institutions of family, neighborhood and community provided stability that could help young people safely through the "growing up" process. Now society is increasingly fragmented and television has introduced children to all aspects of adult life.

Thus, communication between parents and their children has become more crucial. Young people need support and advice on how successfully to manage the "work" of the adolescent years.

Experiencing growing pains as they verge on maturity, adolescents also need gradual, reasonable preparation for making their own decisions. This includes opportunities to discuss with parents, as well as their peers, what their choices are and the possible consequences of their actions. In the following section we will discuss the various aspects of communications skills and responsible decision making.

# Part 2
# How to Help

Good communication within the family is the foundation for the mutual trust that encourages responsibility. When parents and children are able to communicate well, they find it's much easier to resolve conflicts and to arrive at mutually agreeable decisions.

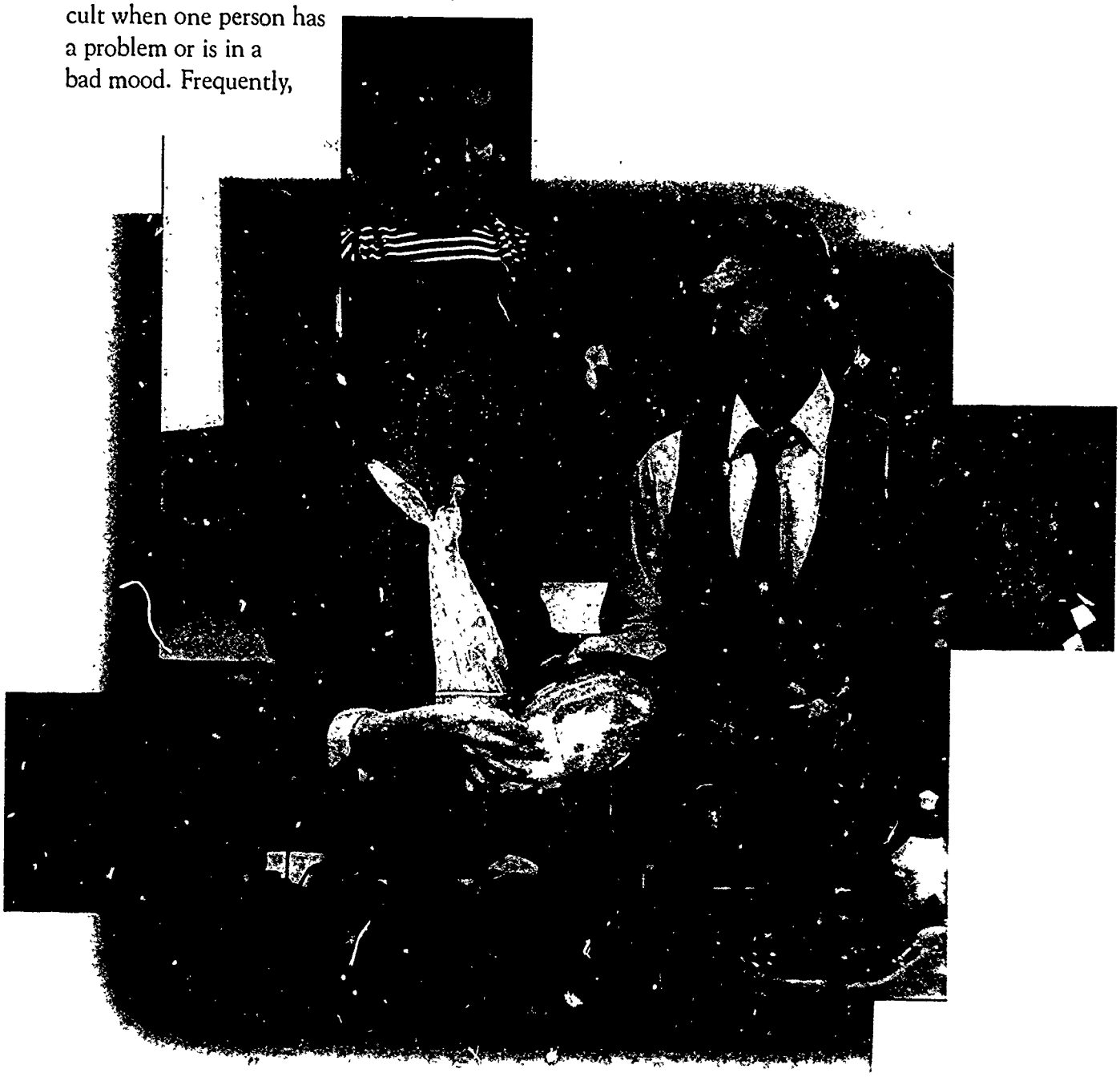
To communicate effectively, parents need to express accurately to their children their own ideas and feelings as well as to listen to and understand the youngster's thoughts and emotions. Adolescents, even more than younger children, need

someone who will listen. They need a sounding board off which to bounce developing ideas, and they need someone with whom to talk out their problems.

# How Not to Communicate

Good communication is particularly difficult when one person has a problem or is in a bad mood. Frequently, instead of listening, parents react with responses that block communication. For instance:

*Typical Response*
**Threatening**
***"If you don't, then. . . ."***
***"You'd better, or. . . ."***
*Possible Reaction*
***Invites testing of threatened consequences, anger, rebellion.***



*Typical Response*
Preaching
*"You should have. . . ."*
*"It is your responsibility. . . ."*
*"You ought to. . . ."*
*Possible Reaction*
*Communicates lack of trust in child's sense of responsibility.*

*Typical Response*
Blaming
*"You are lazy."*
*"You are not thinking maturely."*
*Possible Reaction*
*Cuts off communication from child over fear of being criticized.*

*Typical Response*
Analyzing
*"What's wrong with you is. . . ."*
*"You're just tired."*
*"You don't really mean that."*
*Possible Reaction*
*Stops communication as child fears being misunderstood or exposed.*

*Typical Response*
Pacifying
*"Oh, cheer up."*
*"It's not so bad!"*
*Possible Reaction*
*Makes child feel misunderstood, angry, confused.*

*Typical Response*
Probing
*"Why did you do that?"*
*"Who was there with you?"*
*"Exactly what did you say?"*
*Possible Reaction*
*Provokes anxiety, withdrawal, half truths to avoid criticism.*

*Typical Response*
Avoiding
*"Let's talk about pleasant things."*
*Remaining silent, turning away.*
*Possible Reaction*
*Implies child's problems are unimportant, discouraging openness.*

One of the best ways parents can avoid these typical responses is to concentrate more on listening. When parents listen with interest, children feel their ideas are valued,

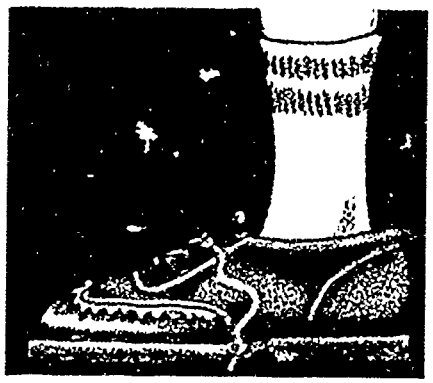
that they are respected. Such respect gives the child a sense of self-esteem and confidence as the child reasons, "If my parents believe I'm worth listening to, I must be a person of value and importance."

# Listen- So They'll Talk

Listening is an art that requires practice. Here are some ideas to help you become a better listener, for your child's sake.

*Be attentive.* Stop what you're doing as soon as you can and give full attention. Focus fully on your child's words, using eyes as well as ears. A youngster may say nothing is wrong when dejected looks tell you differently. So be sensitive to tone of voice and expression. Ask yourself what your child is trying to tell you.

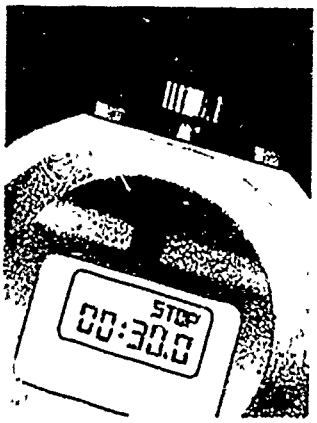
*Encourage talk.* Eye contact, a smile, a nod and one-word responses indicate understanding if not agreement. Keep questions brief, open and friendly, but try to avoid "why" questions. Children don't always know all the reasons behind their actions and feelings and open-ended questions won't help.



Often, repeating an important idea your young teen has expressed, but in a tentative way, draws the child out. "It sounds like your feelings were hurt when she said that." "You must feel very proud to have done that. Am I right?"

*Try to empathize.* Understanding others begins with empathy, putting oneself into their shoes, as we will see in an exercise in Part III. Empathizing with the adolescent takes imagination and patience. But try to focus on underlying feelings your youngster may be finding difficult to express. Demonstrating empathy helps you both understand the youngster's actions and reactions better.

*Listen with respect.* React to your child as you would to an adult friend. Grownups tend to do most of the talking when conversing with young people. Listen as much as you talk. After speaking for half a minute or so, stop and let your youngster have a chance. And accept the fact adolescents are complainers. Let them get their grievances off their chests. Try not to interrupt or push a topic they don't want to discuss.

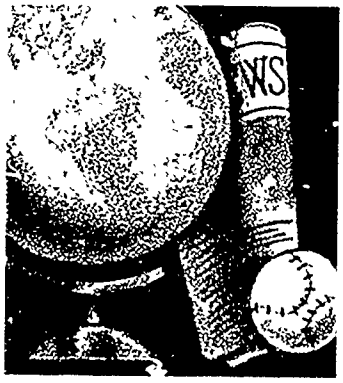



Listening is certainly one of the most important skills of parenthood. It builds closeness. It also helps young people release pent-up emotions and strengthens their ability to make decisions and solve their own problems.

# Talk-So They'll Listen

Take time to have relaxed conversations alone with each of your children on a regular basis, five or 10 minutes each day. Frequent talks will help you spot difficulties before they become real problems.

So often when parents talk to their youngsters, they correct, criticize or command. Though we may occasionally need to direct behavior, the conversation should be enjoyable for both parent and child. We should also have talks about world events and reading, sports and movies, science and religion, thoughts and feelings. In open discussions, various points of view are expressed and everyone both talks and listens. It is often helpful to be ***doing*** something together when you talk—and preferably when others are not around.

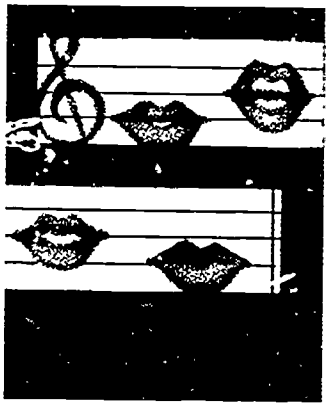


Here are some specific guidelines for talking with adolescents.

***Show respect.*** As you did in listening, so in talking. Show your young teenager the same courtesy and interest you would show your adult friends.

***Be brief.*** The time to stop talking is before your youngster stops listening. If you must get across a message, feed a little information—remember the half-minute rule for good listening?—then ask for comment before adding a little more. Try not to lecture.

***Be aware of your tone of voice.*** Often it's not what you say but how you say it that conveys your message—how loudly, softly, fast or slowly you speak. You also communicate with eye contact and facial expression.



***Be specific.*** Strive consciously to communicate in simple and specific terms. For instance, instead of "I wish you didn't look so sloppy," say "I'll treat you to a haircut Saturday." Instead of "We'll go to the pool together soon," specify "Let's go swimming this weekend."

And, lastly, help your youngster empathize with ***you*** by expressing ***your*** feelings. Reveal some of your inner self. Let your youngster know you also are an individual and can be hurt by others, even confused in your thinking and fearful of certain situations.

Emphasize ***your*** feelings, not ***their*** behavior.

Don't say: "You should be helping me with dinner and the dishes. You're so lazy and inconsiderate sometimes." *("You" message)*

Do say: "I get so angry when I get stuck doing all this work by myself." *("I" message)*

Don't say: "Your room is such a mess. How can you live like that?" *("You" message)*

Do say: "When I see clothes spread all over the floor, I am furious. I feel like throwing the whole mess into the trash." *("I" message)*

***"You" messages tend to cast blame, lower self-esteem, harm the relationship and fail to change behavior in the long run. "I" messages tell others how we feel, state the problem and how it affects us, do not threaten, and tend both to help the relationship and change behavior.***

By adopting better ways of talking and listening, parents accomplish a lot toward educating their children for responsibility. Young teens are in transition, preparing for a time when they will have to be more independent. Good communication builds good relationships and is the best foundation for helping our young teenagers learn to make more of their own decisions.

# Responsible Decision Making

Children and adolescents need the opportunity to practice making decisions in order to become self-directed, critical thinkers. They need the opportunity to learn that sometimes postponing a decision is a decision in itself.

When parents make all decisions, children tend to see their lives as controlled by others. Then they are not likely to attempt decision making when they reach adolescence. Adults who suggest and help, rather than direct and decide, are more likely to instill the confidence adolescents need to make more and more independent decisions.

Young people need opportunities to examine the potential consequences of choices. to choose and to accept the responsibility for the choices they make.

Here are steps you can follow to teach responsible decision making.

1. ***Acknowledge the facts.*** Adolescents are faced with choices that can affect their lives. Tell them you know they have important decisions to make, that some are very difficult and that the consequences are not always easy to accept.
2. ***Clarify the issue.*** Make sure you are both talking about the same thing, that you have the same concerns.
3. ***Gather and examine current information.*** Many of our beliefs, our opinions, are based on bits and pieces of information. It is important that we gather the facts relevant to a given issue. With information at hand, we can more appropriately filter out conflicting messages, separate fact from fiction and make constructive choices.
4. ***Look at alternative courses of action.*** Make a list together of all the possible choices presented by the situation at hand. Write down everything either of you thinks of, even if it seems silly or unacceptable. The process of elimination will follow. At this stage, however, it is important to include every idea.
5. ***Examine the likely consequences.*** Ask the question, "What are the expected consequences of a given decision?" Then compile a list of the pros and cons. The pros,

for example, might include friends' approval, having fun, feeling grown-up or appearing independent. It is important to acknowledge what a young person might enjoy about the behavior, even though some of the supposed pros may not be desirable—or acceptable—by others' standards at any age.

6. ***Discuss feelings, beliefs and moral considerations.*** After you have looked at the pros and cons of a decision, encourage an examination of feelings, values, beliefs. This might be done by sharing your own feelings and beliefs, along with your thoughts when you made a somewhat similar decision. What have been your feelings when you have faced such choices—and why? Discuss them.

Your honesty can be powerful. Perhaps you regret a decision you once made, ignoring your own beliefs or instincts in order to feel more accepted, to go along with the crowd. How did you end up feeling—and why?

Discuss family values and moral considerations. What experiences have you had or heard about, what values do you believe this violates or promotes—and why?

Remember that this technique may backfire if you preach. This approach is designed to help youth explore and develop their *own* values and morals, to be honest with themselves about how they really feel. Respect their feelings by encouraging open and honest examination. Try not to condemn them or their feelings. To do so encourages resistance to you and your values.

7. ***Discuss what our society considers acceptable behavior.*** Young teens are well acquainted with their own peer group standards. They may not be so familiar with those of society as a whole and are likely to dismiss what they perceive as society's principles as arbitrary or old-fashioned.

   As a representative of adult society, you can outline what is expected of its members, for example, responsibility for debts and other financial obligations, consideration of others, responsibility for one's own actions. At this point, you might discuss legal restrictions, to show that society holds some beliefs so strongly it is willing to use various sanctions to enforce them.
8. ***Decide on the best possible course of action.*** Having discussed all of the relevant facts, the various alternatives, the consequences of each of the possible choices and everyone's feelings and beliefs, you and your youngster are now ready to make a decision. And keep in mind this may involve compromise.

# A Voice and a Choice

These suggestions are designed to guide you in helping your adolescent develop sound decision-making skills. They are not meant to be used in their entirety in all situations. Their application is up to you.

The responsible decision-making goal is to give youngsters a voice and—*when appropriate*—a choice, in matters that affect them. The primary purpose of this booklet is to help you in directing the participation of your children in those matters which affect their lives.

# Part 3
# Homework for You Both

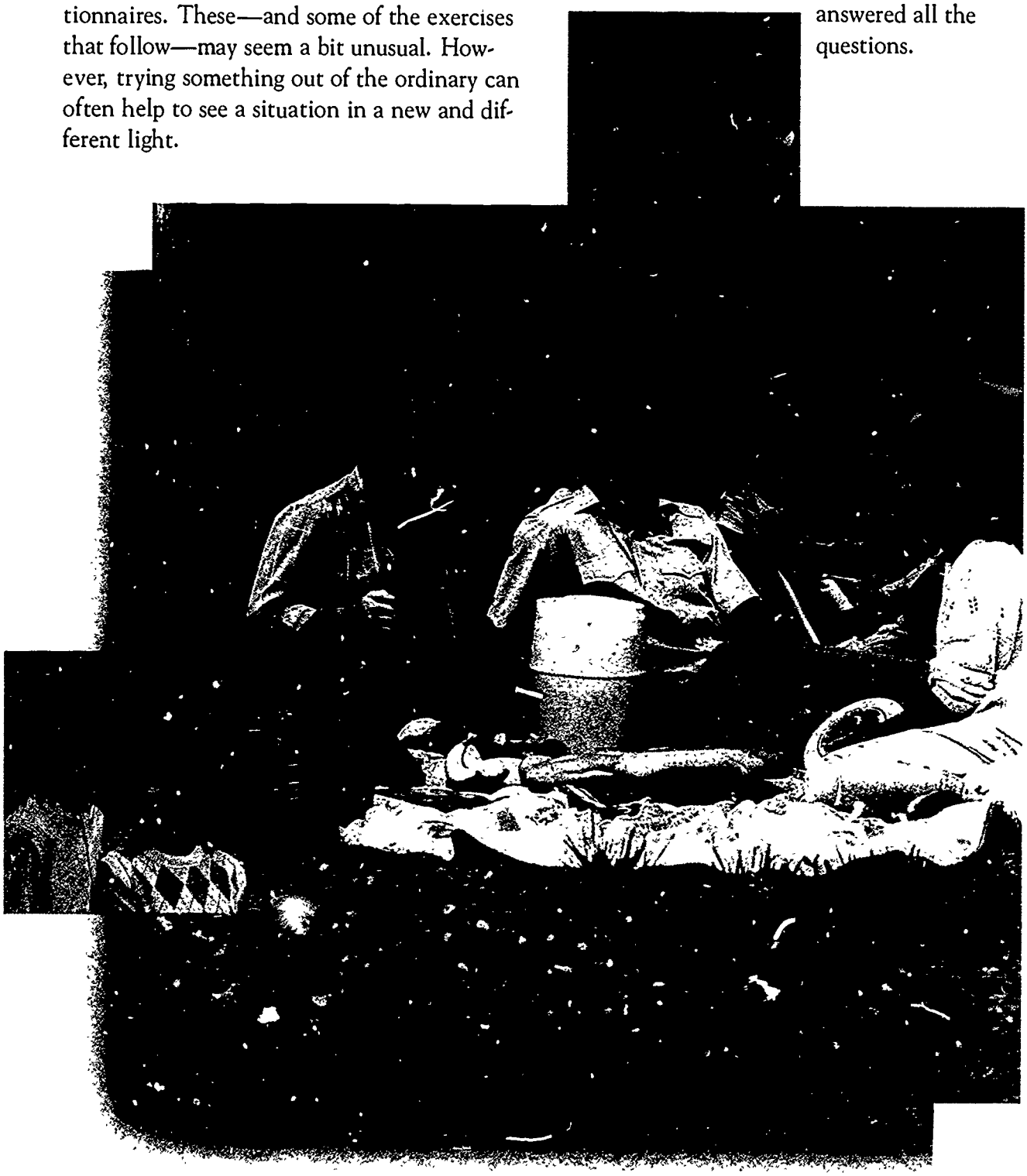
The preceding sections have offered some insights into the adolescent world and have provided concrete guidelines for (1) improving communications between parents and adolescents and (2) helping parents help their children develop decision-making skills. This third and final section contains parent and youth questionnaires and some exercises to help you establish more open communication with your young teenagers to guide them toward responsible decision making.

# Parent and Youth Questionnaires

In the back of this booklet are two questionnaires. These—and some of the exercises that follow—may seem a bit unusual. However, trying something out of the ordinary can often help to see a situation in a new and different light.

The questionnaires should be separated and answered independently by each of you. It is important that you neither discuss the questions nor compare your answers until both are through.

Please do not read further until both have answered all the questions.



## Scorecard for Parent and Youth Questionnaires

| Question # | Code | Question # | Code |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | 6. | |
| 2. | | 7. | |
| 3. | | 8. | |
| 4. | | 9. | |
| 5. | | 10. | |

"+" means parent and child *agree* and are *satisfied.*

"−" means they *agree* but are *not satisfied.*

"0" means they *disagree.*

Now you are ready to compare answers. Place the completed questionnaires side by side. With the chart above, look for three things:

1. When your answers agree and you are both happy with the situation, mark a plus sign (+) in the code column on the chart. Example: If you both agree, on question 3, that permission is usually granted because of parental trust, write "+" in the code column.
2. Some of your answers may agree but *neither* of you is happy about the situation. Enter a minus sign (−) in the code column. Example: You both agree, on question 3, that the parent usually questions the child. The parent would rather be trusting, the teenager would rather be trusted. So you enter "−" in the code column.
3. Your answers do not agree. Mark these questions with a zero (0).

What does the completed chart mean? The questions you labeled "+" point to areas of your relationship that are strong. ***Build from these strengths.***

The questions labeled "−" indicate problems you are both aware of but would like to improve. That you are aware of a need for change is an advantage. ***You can concentrate on possible solutions.***

The questions labeled "0" may be the toughest to resolve, because the two of you do not agree on the problem. Depending on the question and on your answers, ***try to decide how important each is*** and discuss some compromise solutions. If differences are significant or if you have difficulties, consider seeking the advice of someone you both trust.

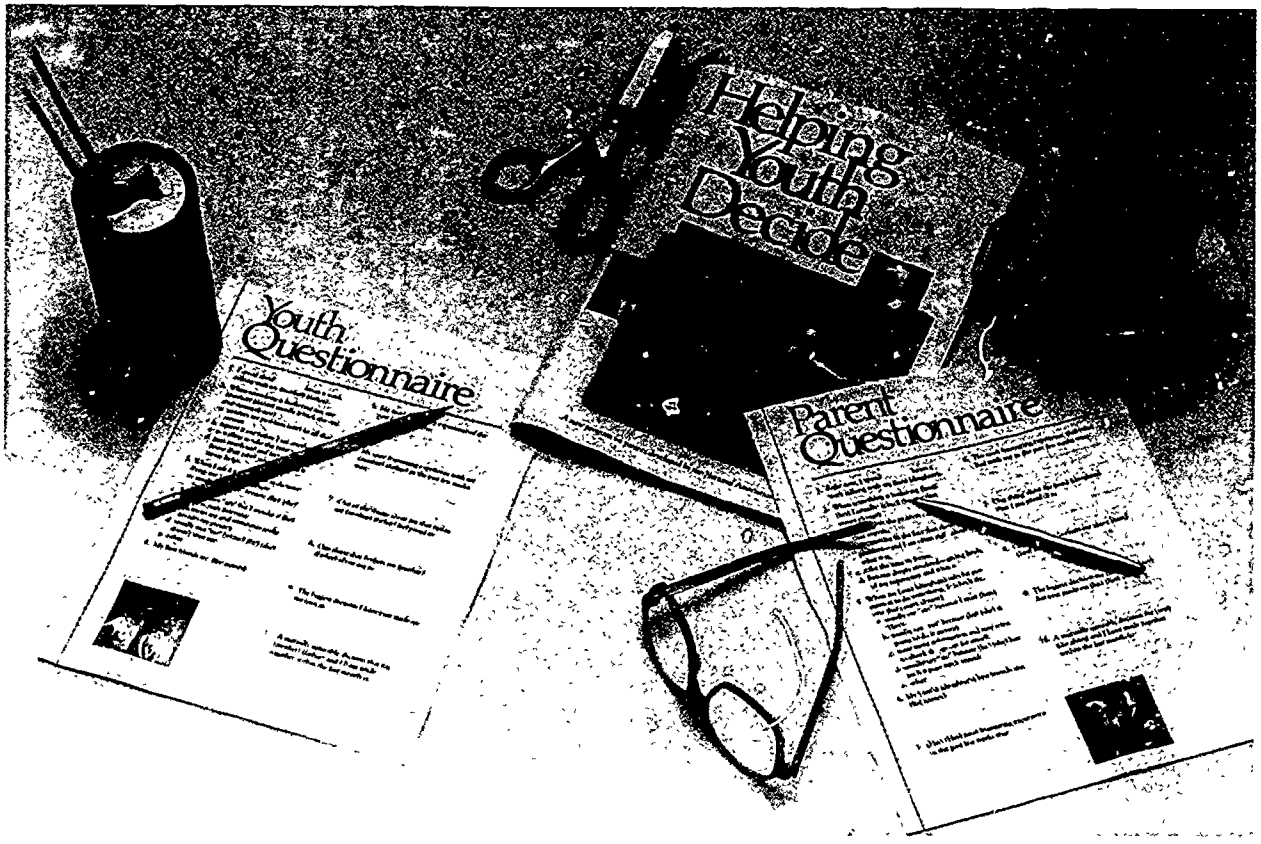
# Ready, Set, Go!

It has been said a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. And that first step is often the hardest. The questionnaires were your first step. You have taken a close look at how you are communicating ***now.*** And you have given some thought to how you want your communications to improve. The following exercises—a sort of "homework" for parent and child—will help you to continue the journey toward improving your relationship.

# *Option 1: Structured Discussions*

Good communication begins with looking each other in the eye and saying what is on your minds. Perhaps you and your youngster have no trouble with that. But you may have found it hard staying on the subject. Your discussions sometimes ramble, which can lead to confusion and frustration.

If so, try using the questions below for structured discussions, keeping some special



"rules" in mind:

1. Be direct and honest. Try not to dwell on past mistakes. Be respectful of each other.
2. Listen. If the parent is talking, the young person should be trying to follow the parent's argument and weighing the points made, and vice versa. This exercise may seem to encourage talking. But actually it requires ***listening.***

3. Try not to interrupt. Don't think of ***your*** next comments while the other is talking. Ask questions of one another to clarify the points made. Work with each other to get to the bottom of each situation you've chosen.

Now read through these questions and together select three for discussion. Spend just five minutes talking about each. Confine yourself to answering these questions. If you have followed the "rules" you shouldn't stray from the subject.

1. What is the most important thing in the life of each of us now?
2. What is one of the dreams of each of us for 10 years from now?
3. When we were last upset with each other, how did we resolve our differences? Would we like to do it the same way the next time we disagree? If not, what would we like to change?
4. When we do things as a family—visit grandparents, worship, go on vacations—how do we make the decisions about when to go, where to go, who is going?
5. How do we make decisions about things like clothing and hair styles, smoking and drinking—individually or together? Whose opinions are important?
6. How can we assure the personal privacy each family member needs?
7. Do we fairly frequently give each other the benefit of the doubt? Can we think of an example when one of us did not and how the situation might have been improved?

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# *Option 2: Role Reversal*

Perhaps you have no trouble looking each other in the eye. And you have no trouble sticking to the subject. But, still, you can't seem to resolve your problems.

This option works well for some. It is called "role reversal" because the parent takes the part of the adolescent and vice versa. This exercise helps both to empathize and to listen more effectively to one another.

Below are the beginnings of several stories. Each sets the stage for you to finish acting out the situation.

Remember: You are to play the part of the child. Your teenager is to play the part of the parent. Play your parts not as a comedy but as a drama. Stick to the same basic guidelines described in Option I:

1. Be direct and honest.
2. Do not dwell on past mistakes.
3. Be respectful of each other.

***The first story:*** As soon as Bob gets home, after a difficult day at work, his 14-year-old daughter Susan asks if she can spend the weekend with her best friend, Judy, at the beach. . . .

***The second story:*** Janet notices that her dresser drawer is open and that someone has apparently been reading her diary. Later, Janet's mother mentions something she could have learned only from reading the diary. . . .

***The third story:*** Tom has been told to stop spending time with his friend Jack. Jack was recently suspended from school for fighting, the first time he ever had been in trouble. This weekend, Tom had planned to attend a concert with Jack. He still wants to. . . .

***The fourth story:*** Jim's mother works and is not at home during the day. Jim called her at work, but she said she was unable to talk at the moment, and then forgot to call him back. When she gets home, Jim doesn't want to talk about it. . . .

## *Option 3: Letters*

Some people understandably have difficulty expressing themselves face to face. It's not always easy to look someone straight in the eye and say what you really think—that you love him, for example, or that you wish she would leave you alone, or that you are sorry about something you said.

Try writing letters to each other. Write as if you haven't seen each other for several months. Make the letters as long as you wish. This approach can help you learn to express your feelings to one another.

If it helps, you could (1) write as if you are talking about someone else, or (2) pretend you are writing to a best friend.

If you have a hard time getting started, go back to the questionnaire and select a question that you marked "+" or "−". A "0" would be too complex to start with.

In any case, follow the rules that we have used before:

1. Be honest and direct. Don't beat around the bush or you're likely to cause confusion.
2. Don't dredge up a lot of ancient history. You may need to point to past problems. But don't dwell on them. No one likes to be reminded of mistakes.
3. Be respectful. Both of you are people. The biggest difference is that one of you is older.

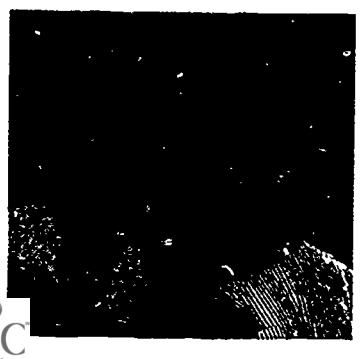
# Practice Makes Perfect!

Adolescence is a time of growth and development, a time to sort out and begin to deal with the complexities of adult life. Young people must adjust to radical changes in their bodies, outgrow childhood emotions and begin to take on adult responsibilities. Moreover, it is a time when most young people make decisions about the direction their lives will take; when they examine for the first time the religious, ethical and political values of their families and society; when they choose vocational goals and undertake the education and training necessary to achieve these goals.

The ability to make choices rationally and responsibly is neither inborn nor easily acquired. Young people need help and practice in learning to make the decisions that affect their lives. We hope that this booklet has provided you with some guidelines for helping your young teenager lay the groundwork for responsible adulthood.

# Youth Questionnaire

1. I spend about _____ hours a week talking with my (mother) (father).
2. When something is bothering me, my (mother) (father) usually: (check the one that comes closest)
   a. assumes my problems can't be all that serious.
   b. figures it out before I say anything.
   c. is willing to take the time to listen.
   d. goes overboard and lectures me. I know (he) (she) means well but it never helps.
3. When I ask for permission to do something, my (mother) (father):
   a. usually says "yes" because (he) (she) trusts me.
   b. usually says "yes" but I wonder if (he) (she) is even listening.
   c. questions me and sometimes really invades my privacy.
   d. usually says "no" because (he) (she) doesn't trust me.
   e. other_____
4. My best friends are: (list names)
5. My most frustrating experience of the past few weeks was:
6. My most frustrating experience *with* my (mother) (father) in the past few weeks was:
7. One of the things about me that makes my (mother) (father) feel proud is:
8. One thing that bothers my (mother) (father) about me is:
9. The biggest decision I have ever made on my own is:
10. A mutually agreeable decision that my (mother) (father) and I have made together within the last month is:



# Parent Questionnaire

1. Right now, I spend _____ hours a week talking with my (son) (daughter).
2. When something is bothering (him) (her) I usually: (check the one that comes closest)
   a. assume that the problem can't be all that serious.
   b. am sensitive to the fact that there is a problem—and I am often right about what it is.
   c. take the time to listen.
   d. become deeply involved—giving freely of my experience and advice.
3. When my (son) (daughter) asks for permission to do something, I: (check the one that comes closest)
   a. usually say "yes" because I trust (him) (her).
   b. usually say "yes" because (he) (she) is going to do it anyway.
   c. want more information and may want to check things out for myself.
   d. usually say "no" because (he) (she) has such a poor track record.
   e. other_____
4. My (son's) (daughter's) best friends are: (list names)
5. (His) (Her) most frustrating experience in the past few weeks was:
6. The most frustrating experience (he) (she) had *with me* in the past few weeks was:
7. One thing about my (son) (daughter) that I am proud of is:
8. One thing that bothers me about (him) (her) is:
9. The biggest decision my (son) (daughter) has ever made on (his) (her) own is:
10. A mutually agreeable decision my (son) (daughter) and I have made together within the last month is: