

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



1. What are **three** words that you think describe the teenage years?
2. What is **one thing** that worries you about becoming a teenager?
3. What would you tell someone your age who—
 - a. was having trouble making friends?
 - b. couldn't get along with his or her parents?
 - c. didn't like the way he or she looked?
 - d. was trying to act older than he or she really is?
 - e. wasn't doing well in school?
 - f. was pressured into doing drugs by peers?
4. Below, write **Yeah!** for those that sound exciting and **Uh!** for those that don't.

<input type="checkbox"/> Taking high school classes	<input type="checkbox"/> Going to parties
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting a drivers license	<input type="checkbox"/> Going to a high school youth group
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting a job	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting new friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Handling sexual pressures	<input type="checkbox"/> Deciding on college or a career
<input type="checkbox"/> Dating	<input type="checkbox"/> Facing more responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting more freedom from parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Playing high school sports
5. Take a look at these verses—what do you think they say about the future?

Psalm 119:9-10
1 Timothy 4:12
Titus 2:6-8

GREAT EXPECTATIONS [preparing for adolescence]

THIS WEEK

Teenagers today deal with rapid change, confusion, and stress. These factors—along with the other physical, emotional, and intellectual changes—make it hard for young people to cope. This session is designed to let your kids know that it's important to talk about the issues they face as they grow older. It encourages them to ask questions and share their worries and fears.

OPENER

Introduce this topic by having your kids suggest movies or TV shows about teenagers. Make a list of their choices and ask the student to decide if these programs or films deal with the issues in realistic ways or not. How do these shows portray teenagers?

You may also collect a stash of teen magazines (such as *Seventeen*, *Teen* or *YM*) and conduct a magazine scavenger hunt. Divide the group into teams and give each team a magazine. Then call out—or one of your kids call out—the name of something that's advertised (such as names of colognes, perfumes, cosmetics, or brand name clothing) a frequently used word (something you hear your kids use a lot!), a teenage actor, a specific movie title, and so on. The team that finds the item as quickly as possible magazine gets a point.

THE DISCUSSION, BY THE NUMBERS

1. Make a list of the words that the kids used to describe the teenage years. Take your time and focus on how your kids are feeling—fears, excitement, anxieties, et cetera. They most likely will have some misconceptions about the teenage years. There may be some other “red flag” words or phrases that catch your attention. Use this discussion to help them understand these assumptions and discover a healthier, more realistic expectation of teenagers.
2. You may want to rephrase the question with something like this, “What do you think worries other kids your age about becoming a teenager?” Keep a list of their responses on a whiteboard or poster board. Without glossing over their worries about teen-hood, let them know that their fears are very normal. Everyone—even their parents, teachers, and even you—worries about new experiences! Your kids will face many new ones as they enter their teen years. Encourage them to talk with you or another adult if they are anxious about specific issues and want more information or advice.
3. As your kids share their answers to this, ask them if they agree or disagree with the advice given.

Emphasize that it's important for them to support and encourage each other. Challenge them to find ways to build each other up—even if this means cutting the teasing and put-downs.

4. Here's your chance to talk about the expectations of high school. Discuss with them the pros and cons of growing up and what will change as they get older. Let them know you are there for them anytime to offer advice or answer questions that come up.

5. Encourage some of your kids to read their summaries aloud and work with them to make applications for their lives. A useful Bible verse for this is 1 Timothy 4:12.

THE CLOSE

The teenage years are filled with both exciting and confusing times. The fears and stress they face are understandable. There's no doubt that everyone will grow and change—in different ways and at different speeds—during this time. But these changes are exciting, too! You kids will face new challenges and adventures, experience new things, and learn about themselves. And, God is working through all this—molding each one into a different, more experienced, and changing person.

Take some time to talk about what fears they are dealing with and remind them that they come to you at any time with questions or concerns. And ask your kids what they think God feels about them as young people. Does God listen to them as much as their parents? Of course! He's there for them—listening to their fears and frustrations, any time, anywhere.

MORE

- Bank on some of your older high school kids or early college kids for a Q & A session with your junior highers or middle schoolers. Encourage them to ask them what it's like to be in high school, what it's like to be a Christian, how to get along with parents, how they deal with peer pressure, and so on. To keep things rolling smoothly, have your kids write out a few questions before the Q & A.
- Need a better activity for kids who are especially tactile or visual? Whether in a group or individually at home, ask your kids to cut pictures out of magazines—teen, sports, or whatever—that represent teenagers or portray adolescence. Then use them to create a collage that represents your kids' understanding of (or apprehensions about) becoming a teenager.