



Empowering Young Adults as they Transition from Foster Care

Vol. 10, Issue 8

www.PowerhouseProgram.org

September 2011

It's time to do your August Activity Logs! Fax, email, mail or call the hours in to Sue. Thanks!



Are you aware of Oregon Foster Youth Connection? How about FosterClub? At our October 12 ongoing training, youth from these advocacy and leadership groups will be present to tell us about the role of these organizations, the variety of activities they engage in and the resources available to your mentees.

“By having this experience [with OFYC] talking to legislators and speaking out, it made me feel like there are people out there that want to listen and who do care.”

~ Allison, age 16
Mark your calendar now: Wednesday, October 12! Dinner/social hour: 6:00 Speakers: 7:00-8:30

Why does my mentee “forget” our appointments?

This is, bar none, the most frequent complaint I hear from mentors. And you're never sure if they've actually forgotten or if they're blowing you off. Why does this happen? It's a fair question with a number of possible answers! It's so frustrating—and so important—that I will address these answers in many issues of this newsletter. Here's the first installment!

Let's start by talking about the adolescent brain. Dr. Laurence Steinberg, an author and professor of psychology, states, “Maturation of the brain, including the regulation of impulses, thinking ahead, planning and weighing risk and reward lead to improvements in self-regulation... .” Unfortunately, this maturation occurs very gradually and is not complete until the mid-twenties. As this happens, the system processing pleasure and the one regulating impulses learn to work together. “This allows for better coordination of thinking and feeling,” explained Steinberg. “Which is important in controlling impulsive behavior or resisting peer pressure.”

It's important for adults to realize that teenagers may not be so good at thinking ahead, envisioning consequences of their actions, resisting peer pressure and forgoing immediate rewards to get a bigger payoff. Foster youth, without the advantage of loving, committed parents to help them learn, are likely to have an even harder time with this than their peers. So even if they like you and you have good plans together, when something that sounds fun comes up, your date may fly right out of their brains or be supplanted by the more exciting prospect.

Dr. Steinberg says the best way to maintain a positive influence is to be hands-on. “Stay involved, even though your teenager may not seem as though he or she wants it,” he advised. Communication is also key. “Be ready to talk - and listen - to your teenager,” he said. Finally, Steinberg says consistent guidance helps adolescents stay on the right track. “There is a great deal of evidence that teenagers thrive when [adults] are what psychologists call ‘authoritative,’” he said. That does not mean ‘authoritarian’ i.e., military! It means warm, firm and fair.

Practically speaking, make sure your mentee has a calendar where he or she can enter your appointments and make sure they enter them. Get in touch not long before your appointment to confirm. If they miss the appointment, talk about it openly! Tell your mentee how you felt when the appointment was missed and let him or her know what you want for the future, focusing on “I” statements. For example, “I felt frustrated and disappointed when you weren't there at the time we planned. It made me wonder if maybe you had lost sight of the value of our mentoring relationship. Can we talk about that? ... In the future, if something else comes up, I'd appreciate it if you would call or text me to let me know.”

Maria Hein, 503-234-8757 x 24

Email: Maria@PowerhouseProgram.org

Sue Thoroughman, MA 503-234-8757 x 25

Email: Sue@PowerhouseProgram.org