

Tips for Adults Working with Teens



When promoting the Under YOUR Influence Web site, you will want to work well with the youth on your team. You may have been invited to participate because of your commitment to youth issues, professional expertise, influence in your community, or your desire to make a difference.

Certainly you have a wide range of talents, contacts, and special knowledge that will be a great asset to the youth who invited you to partner with them. It is only by teaming up youth and adults that serious issues facing young people today can be effectively addressed.

Here are some great tips to help you work more effectively with young people that we got directly from them.

Don't

- Treat us like children.
- Assume we can't make good decisions because of our age.
- Think we can't contribute to our community because we don't have as much experience as adults.
- Determine your opinion of us by our hairstyle or the clothes we wear.
- Single teens out who belong to minority groups.
- Try to cover for us when we mess up.
- Separate us into groups (adult group versus teen group).
- Take over our projects.
- Tell us it can't be done.
- Tell us what our goals are.
- Try to protect us.
- Do it for us.
- Refer to us as "children", "youngsters", or "kids".

Do

- Talk to us like adults.
- Remember if we are a part of the problem, we must be a part of the solution.
- Ask us what we think. Only youth know what other youth want and need.
- Listen to our ideas and respect our opinions.
- Treat us as equals.
- Be patient and help us learn from our mistakes. Just like adults, we need to make mistakes to be able to learn from them.
- Put us into groups with adults so we learn to work together.
- Let us take the lead on our projects. Be there to support, encourage, and guide.
- Offer your insights and suggestions.
- Hold us accountable to our commitments.
- Be honest with your opinion. It's OK to disagree.
- Give us the tools we need to do it for ourselves.
- Call us "youth", "young people", "young adults", or "teens."