

Instructor's Guide
for
***Youth Corrections Series for Young Men:
Choices, Consequences, and Your Future***

Blood Family: Finding Support

Overview

We are all bound by blood. Our family ties keep us connected, but no family is perfect. We cannot choose our family, and because of their closeness, our family members have the greatest power to help or to hurt us. Our families *should* prepare us to face life's difficulties. They are in the best position to be role models and to teach us right from wrong. However, at some point we all reach an age where we must be accountable for our own actions.

Odds are very good that most of your students come from an unstable family background at best, and likely have one or more family members who have been in trouble with the law. Much of what your students learn about right and wrong, self-control, anger management, and even basic survival comes from parents and siblings.

For most of your students, the first step towards making a positive change is understanding who they are and how they got to this place in their lives. What in their past has influenced their decisions up to this point? What role has their family played in constructing their identity? Only by understanding who they are and why they've made the choices they've made can your students begin to think about their future.

This video discusses the role that families play in shaping our identity and behaviors. It emphasizes that while families are important, they aren't always helpful and, in fact, are often harmful. It encourages students to think about the positive and negative characteristics of their family members, to understand the underlying causes of their family's behaviors, and to think about ways that they can break the cycle that has led to their own criminal behaviors.

The video provides opportunities and questions for group discussion. Feel free to follow the cues, pausing for activities and discussion as your own schedule dictates.

Presentation Suggestions

Begin by asking students to think about the role family members have played in their lives. What have they learned from parents and siblings, both positive and negative? What patterns do they see in their families across generations? What would they change about their relationships with their family members? Keep in mind that these are intensely personal issues, and some students may be reluctant to discuss these matters in a group setting. It might be easier to talk about this in general terms.

When you feel students have begun thinking about these issues, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the students to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the video. Encourage students to take notes or to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information they learned. Follow up this discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from students or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group. Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. What impact does our family have on shaping who we are?
2. Do parents always make the best role models?
3. What role does education play in your family and your future?
4. True or false: You are destined to follow in your father's footsteps?

Answer Key

1. Parents and siblings probably have the most profound impact on shaping our personality as we grow. However, they do not, ultimately, dictate our actions once we've grown. As a young adult, you need to take responsibility for your own actions.

2. Not necessarily. Though they are in the best position to provide a good example, they often struggle with their own barriers and past history, often times leading to negative and even criminal actions.
3. A lack of education increases the likelihood that family members will continue to make bad choices and engage in unlawful behavior. However, even a high school diploma can make a big difference when it comes to escaping that tradition of bad decisions.
4. False. You can take responsibility for yourself and commit to breaking the cycle of negative behavior.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: What Does Family Mean to You?

Format: Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Paper, pen

Procedure:

1. We all know that you can't choose your family. However, we all have a variety of notions of what a family could or should be. Some of these ideas come from culture (like *Brady Bunch* or *The Cosby Show*), some come from other families we see around us. Often we compare these other ideas of what a family looks like with our own.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or four and have each group discuss the definition of the word "family." What does it mean to be a family? What does the "typical" family look like? Where do our ideas about family come from? Does family always have to include blood relatives?
3. When each group has a general definition of the word "family," have them define the phrase "perfect family." What does *it* look like? What makes it perfect? Is such a family even possible?
4. Come back together as a whole group and discuss the various definitions of "family." What do the definitions share? How are they different? How can your students start to rethink the way they see their family?

Activity #2

Title: Family Role Models

Format: Individual/Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Paper, pen

Procedure:

1. Much of our behavior stems from what we've learned from those around us. Have each student divide a sheet of paper into two columns. Label these columns "Positive Role Models" and "Negative Role Models."

2. Have students put each of their family members in one of these two columns. Then, after each name, have students list the reasons *why* they put that family member in that category.
3. Finally, have students review the reasons they've listed. What qualities make for a positive family role model? Which qualities make for a negative one? What qualities do they—the students—possess that would make them one or the other if they were to have their own family?

Discussion Questions

1. Does your family treat you the way you'd like to be treated? If you were raising a family of your own, how would you treat your children?
2. Criminal or illegal behavior is often cyclic. That is to say, it is passed down from one generation to the next. What can you do to break the cycle of bad choices and criminal behaviors created by your own family?
3. It is important to have positive role models and people you can count on to help you overcome your problems. But how do you know whom you can trust? What qualities do you look for in someone who could support you? Which of your family members do you trust and why?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise.

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. Your family is responsible for your actions and behaviors.
2. A lack of education is a big challenge to escaping one's potentially harmful background.
3. Our family history shapes us and helps make us who we are.
4. You should always follow your family's traditions.
5. Family members always provide the best role models.
6. Part of making a personal change is understanding where your parents are coming from—their own personal history.
7. Some parents simply don't care what kinds of activities their children are involved in.
8. You have the power to break the cycle of poverty and dangerous or harmful behavior.
9. The only people you can count on to help you are members of your family.

10. Most juveniles who have been arrested have had one or more family members who have served time.

Answer Key

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| 1. False | 6. True |
| 2. True | 7. True |
| 3. True | 8. True |
| 4. False | 9. False |
| 5. False | 10. True |

Homework Option

Have students write a letter to a family member explaining why they (the student) have engaged in negative behaviors. Stress to students that they shouldn't blame the family member for what has happened. Encourage students to take responsibility for their actions, but also to explain the sources of some of the emotions that caused them to engage in criminal behaviors. Tell students that they do not need to give this letter to anyone—that is merely an exercise in working through the emotions, relationships, and past circumstances that lead to their criminal behavior.