



Reducing Risky Behavior in Teens: A Program for Parents

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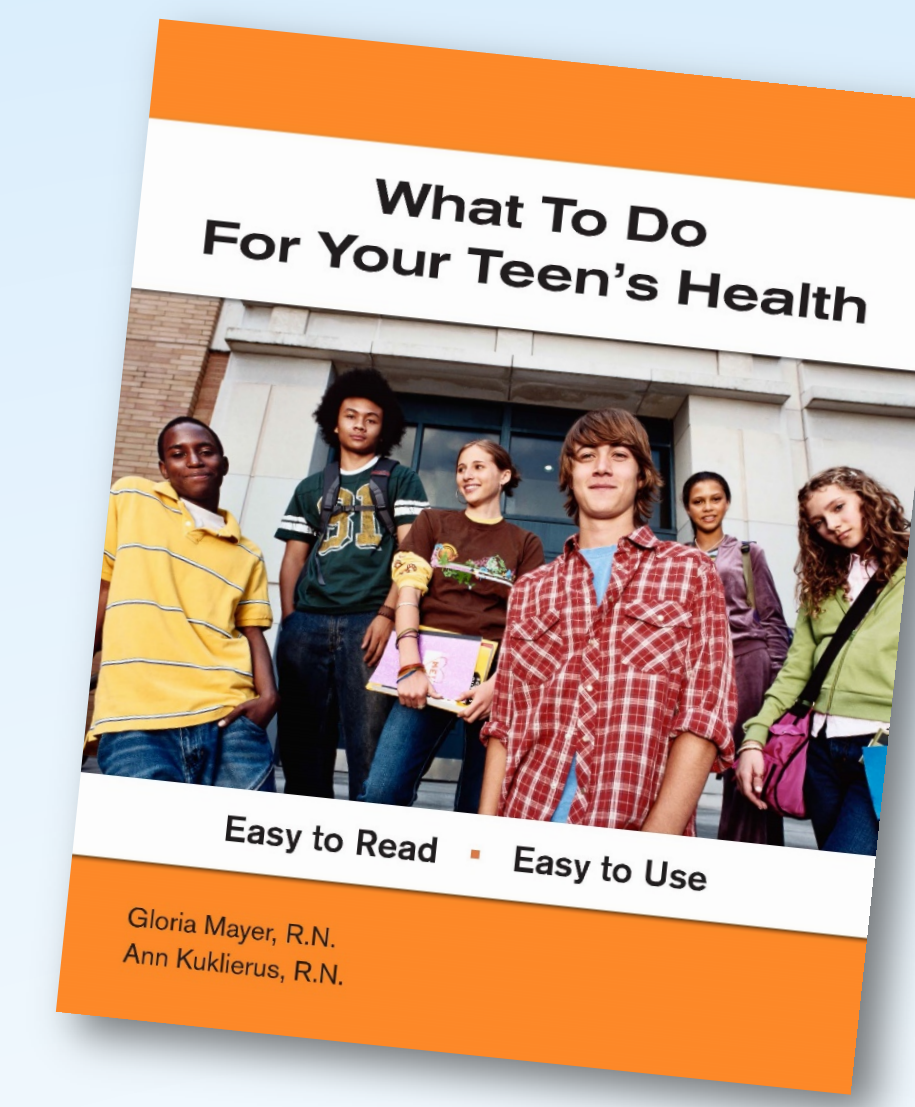
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Background

Positive parental involvement and communication are effective methods to decrease risky sexual behavior among adolescents. Unfortunately, some parents are uncomfortable communicating with their teen about high risk behaviors (Eastman et al., 2006). Additionally, 88% of adults have limited literacy skills thereby making communicating health risks even more difficult (Berkman et al., 2011). Health literacy, commonly defined as the ability to comprehend, access, and act upon health information, should be integrated into programs targeting parents or guardians of adolescents.



Results

Outcomes were measured using pre/post-test knowledge assessments, interviews three months post program, and separate focus groups with parents and adolescents. The quantitative data was insignificant due to a small sample size; however, qualitative data revealed participants value open communication and believe engaging adolescents should begin earlier. Adolescents reported spending more time with their parents as a result of participating in the program.

Methods

We Thrive: What To Do for Your Teens Health is a 10 week program targeting parents and caregivers of adolescents age 11-17. The program was piloted in La Habra, California with participants who were recruited from the La Habra Family Resource Center.

Participants received the *What To Do for Teen's Health* book which is written at a 5th grade reading level and published by the Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA). The *Teen Health* book was the primary learning tool used by participants throughout the program, however other low-literacy materials were created to supplement book. The curriculum was written using the Health Belief behavior change model and the Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors framework, which are proven to reduce adolescent risk factors and enhance well-being (Harper Brown, 2014).

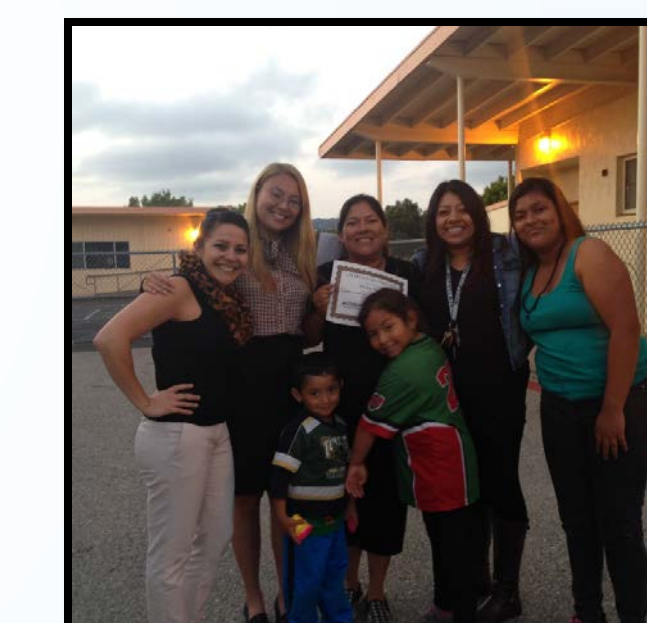
Objectives

Goal:

We Thrive: What To Do for Your Teen's Health enhances parent skills and knowledge to help teens flourish by promoting protective factors and increasing family connectedness.

Objectives:

- By the end of the program, participants will be able to discuss teen growth and development and differentiate between normal and not normal behavior
- By the end of the program, participants will have used the "What to Do for Your Teen's Health" book at least 3 times to promote discussion with their teen on sensitive or difficult topics.
- Six months after the end of the program, participants will have increased self-efficacy in talking with their teen on issues important to them; in their ability to identify the early warning signs of potential teen troubles; and in their knowledge of how to access available resources to help their teen.



Conclusion

To improve adolescent health, programs need to empower parents with positive communications skills and health literacy. As a result of the pilot program, we learned that parents enjoy discussing adolescent issues with other parents. Many parents reported practicing new communication skills and referencing the *Teen Health* book when faced with difficult topics. The hope is this translates into better health outcomes among teens.

Due to the small sample size quantitative data could not be collected. Qualitative data showed positive self reported behavior changes three months after the end of the program. More studies are needed that include health literacy principles to ensure important messaging to prevent risky sexual behavior in teens.

References

Berkman, N.D., Sheridan, S.L., Donahue, K.E. (2011). Low Health Literacy and Health Outcomes: An Updated Systematic Review. *Ann Intern Med*, 155, 97-107.

Eastman, K.L., Corona, R., Schuster, M.A. (2006). Talking Parents, Healthy Teens: A Worksite-based Program for Parents to Promote Adolescent Sexual Health. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 3(4), 1-10.

Harper Browne, C. (2014). *Youth Thrive: Advancing healthy adolescent development and well-being*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Parent Responses	
Q: Which chapters were most interesting? Useful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex, Violence, Drugs • We think they are too young to experience it but they do
Q: How has this program changed the relationship with your teen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's just as important for dads to communicate with their daughters as the mother • Helped improve communication skills by using I-statements and expressing feelings
Q: How would you describe this program to another parent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program gives you a book which is a good tool to talk about difficult issues such as STDs • It will help parents to have a better relationship by improving communication to prevent problems

Teen Responses	
Q: Do you think you spend more time with your parents now that they have been in this class?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (unanimous)
Q: What has changed since your parents have been in these classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They told us what happened in class • They told us that they care about us
Q: Are you happy that you parent came to these classes? Why or why not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps parents so their kids can have a better life and not get in trouble • Learn more ways to teach us • They play with me