

## **BUILDING RAPPORT WITH TEENAGERS by Johnny Derouen**

ATTITUDE CHANGE – When a teenager comes into your life, you are personally representing Jesus Christ to that teenager. That thought needs to control all you do!

Here are some suggestions:

1. Get organized so you have time for teens.  
i.e. – arrive early on Sundays; plan to stay late  
When they are ready – you’d better be ready!  
Think ahead so you’ll have time for teens – Hallway, class, department.  
Don’t stand with adults.
2. Make unconditional love the foundation for every relationship. They must know your love for them doesn’t depend on anything. Drink, dope, wear strange clothes and it doesn’t affect your love for them – it may sadden or break your heart but you’ll love them as much as you love the active / Godly ones.  
Opens the door to all kinds of relationship pluses. ‘I am more concerned about you than about what you can do for my class or program.’ It shows you are interested in them as a person – not an individual.

Ex. “I’ve missed you a lot” not “Where have you been?” But “Hey, it is good to see you. How are you? You add so much to our class – we miss what you give.”

**The teenagers who bump up against your life  
will have an experience that will change their lives.**

3. Develop a mindset of asking questions as a way to build rapport and develop insights!  
LISTEN!  
Ex. Wagon wheel – same idea. You learn so much as you listen. Don’t always stay in lecture 101. Teens love to talk about themselves – not always to parents.  
  
Ex. If you could change one thing about you life, what would it be?  
How do you feel about...?  
What is the biggest need or strength of our youth group?  
What is school like?
4. Learn names – Whatever it takes. They will test you a lot. Use them. Hard to be close to someone whose name you don’t know/remember.  
Ex. How I do it:  
Stop. Write down names of 3 youth with unchurched parents
  1. How they got involved
  2. Name of Parents
  3. Would parent recognize you

5. Use appropriate physical touch.  
Hug, pat, handshake. But if you hug the cute ones, you'd better hug the ugly ones.  
Role model that church is a caring place to be.  
Ex. Priority – they stand in line
  
6. Communicate affirmation continually. Always think of genuine, honest feelings that you can put into words.  
I think of you often.  
I believe in you.  
You're special.  
Knowing you has made me a better person.  
You encourage me.  
  
Be excited to see them on Sundays – “Glad you're here! Get ready for the time of your life!”
  
7. Age is not an issue so don't try to act young. They need adult friends and role models not big kids. Accept your time limitations with out guilt. Give Sunday – AM – Wednesday, Big events... Take them on places you have to go.
  
8. Blow them away. Do things out of the ordinary.  
Ex. Birthday – Call, gift at work, go by the ball field or band practice  
Graduation – “I'm proud of you son, you must be too.”  
Secret – Using teenager biographical cards. Impression that they are important.
  
9. Be flexible – Don't let this scare you.  
Don't show shock with what they tell you.  
Go with the flow if need be.  
Be ready to adjust to meet needs.
  
10. Love life – Role model life for them.  
Who you are and what God has you doing  
Love your spouse / Secure Godly single adult  
Let them see the satisfaction Jesus brings to your life.

Well, you're ready now for the greatest adventure – seeing Jesus in the world of teenagers. Remember – Key word is “guide.” We're guides. The beginning of a vital Youth Sunday School is: Loving teens, building a strong foundation of safety, relationships, experiences, challenge, and hope learning to build rapport with teenagers. Organizing your team, setting the atmosphere, involving teenagers. Be creative! Build rapport!  
Remember – They need Jesus. You represent Jesus to each teenager that comes into your life.

**Let's start the adventure!**