



THERESA MAZZA

THERESA IS A LONG TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR AND YOUTH WORKER CURRENTLY VOLUNTEERING AND CAUSING STUDENT MINISTRY MAYHEM AT BROOMFIELD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN BROOMFIELD COLORADO. SHE IS ALSO A SPEAKER, WRITER, MOMMY, AND WIFE.

I was a youth worker in South Florida for seven years. Not much changed from day to day. There was the sunshine, the beach, and fresh seafood year round. Life was flip flopping good. It was always summer.

This isn't the reality parent's and teens live in. Summer fades into the distance and preparation for fall begins. We don't leave the house in flip-flops like we did in the summer because we might find ourselves walking through rain puddles or stomping through the mud.

Just as we prepare for different seasons during the year, parents must prepare for the different seasons of life they will experience with their teens. We can help.



([http://www.simplyyouthministry.com/resources-parents---family-a-parent-s-](http://www.simplyyouthministry.com/resources-parents---family-a-parent-s-guide-to-understanding-bundle.html)

[guide-to-understanding-bundle.html](http://www.simplyyouthministry.com/resources-parents---family-a-parent-s-guide-to-understanding-bundle.html))

Share these encouraging thoughts with the parents in your ministry you are thinking about today.

They still want your attention. Our kids grow up fast. Sometimes they're embarrassed to be seen with you, and the next moment they are joined at the hip. The truth is, they need and want your attention more than ever. This is why it is important to be fully present and engaged with our students when we have the opportunity to spend quality time with them. The texts can wait. The update to facebook can wait. It is easier said than done. Do you have a plan or some boundaries in place that will empower you to fully engage your student the next time you have their attention. Part of my plan includes eating breakfast with my son every morning (I challenge myself not to text, email, or post to facebook during this time).

They still want your praise. Teens take on a lot of added responsibility. They can handle more and are expected to be more independent. This is awesome. But it also means they are receiving a lot of instruction, and what at times feels like constant criticism. Just yesterday my son was borrowing my phone and came across a text exchange I had with my husband. In this series of text we were talking about how blessed we were to have our son. As my son read through the text his face lit up. He became aware that we think he's the best kid in the entire universe. For a moment, he felt adored. As I watched his response it reminded me that my son needs praise and affirmation as much as he needs instruction and direction.

They still want your leadership. If you think they're not listening, they are. If you think they don't care, they do. If you think they want nothing to do with you, they do. No matter how strange, or distant, they still look to you for leadership. Plan times to lead your child by example. Part of our family plan includes my husband reading a daily proverb with our son. This is a planned time when my husband has the opportunity to be a leader and an influence in our son's life.

Raising a teenager is not the same as living in South Florida. It isn't summer everyday. There's a lot parents can prepare for and a lot they can't prepare for. We can ask Jesus to be at the center of their relationships. We can encourage, pray, and partner with the parents in our ministry. We can also offer the parents in our ministry resources that might help them understand their teens a little bit better. You might recommend [this parent bundle \(http://www.simplyyouthministry.com/resources-parents---family-a-parent-s-guide-to-understanding-bundle.html\)](http://www.simplyyouthministry.com/resources-parents---family-a-parent-s-guide-to-understanding-bundle.html) to a few of your youth ministry parents.