

Building effective relationships with teenagers

This video training session is primarily for volunteer youth leaders to use at a time which is convenient to them, ideally as a group, though it could be used by individuals. The structure of the session allows for a flexible length depending on time and situation. The following notes are to guide the person leading the session, but do not assume any previous training experience.

If your time is limited, try to ensure you cover the parts **in bold**. However, feel completely free to alter the session, add your own questions and make it work best for your situation.

This session is based on two videos outlining the principles and practice of building relationships with teenagers. The importance of building strong relationships with young people is clear, but this can be a challenging task. Often leaders find that having a few practical ideas can give them the confidence to make all the difference to their approach to young people; that is the aim of this session. **You should allow at least 30 minutes for this session but if you have 50 minutes or an hour, it could be helpful.**

The speaker is world-renowned youth ministry trainer, Dr Duffy Robbins, Professor of Christian Ministries at Grove City College, Pennsylvania.

OPENING DISCUSSION (5-10 mins)

You might want to read out the information above and ask someone to pray. Then discuss one or both of the following questions:

- *When you were a teenager, can you remember an adult or other leader who made an impact on your life and faith as they took time to build a strong relationship with you?*
- **In the role that you have in youth ministry, what do you find hardest about making effective connections with young people?**

VIDEO

Duffy introduces the principles of relational ministry (referred to as 'Incarnational ministry')

- Play video 'Building effective relationships with teenagers part 1' (4 mins)

DISCUSSION (5-10 mins)

Take some time to reflect on the video, using some or all of these questions:

- *Have you ever taught anyone to drive? How much could you relate to the encouragement from Duffy's wife: "don't forget why you are doing this"?*
- *Do you feel nervous or hesitant about the idea of 'being in the car' with your young people? Why? Do you agree that it is essential?*
- **"Some truths cannot be communicated from a distance." How well do you think you balance 'up front' teaching with getting alongside young people and teaching in the context of relationship?**

VIDEO

Duffy then offers some practical ideas for relational ministry ("The 90 minute challenge")

- Play video 'Building effective relationships with teenagers part 2' (6 mins)

DISCUSSION (10-20 mins)

In this final section, use some or all of these questions as appropriate to tease out the most useful learning for your situation, and then identify useful steps to apply this to your ministry:

- *Does it encourage you to reflect that even though our words can "put young people to sleep" being in relationship with them brings life?*
- *Duffy recognises the challenges of finding time to build relationships among all our other responsibilities. How much do you struggle to make time to do this? Does 90 minutes a week seem achievable?*
- **Talk through the possibility of meeting for one hour with 1-3 of your young people.** (How could this work practically? Can you divide the young people among you? What are the safest and best ways you could do this?)
- **What thoughts do you have about the other suggested ways of contacting young people (phone calls / social media / emails)? What practical steps do you or the congregation need to take to make sure these are possible, safe and transparent?**
- **Discuss the difference these contacts would make – what impact could it have on the young people and your ministry?**

Take some time to pray together and, if appropriate, make a commitment to take 2-3 practical steps together to put this into action.

