



National Forum for Juvenile Justice Educators and Trainers Understanding the Teenage Brain May 4, 2010

Activity:

Surviving Teens

Purpose:

In small groups, participants were asked to share stories of teens and to select one who presents a challenge. Each group wrote a life story about their chosen teen and discussed the challenges in working with this teen. Using the information provided in the workshop, the group brainstormed strategies for working with this teen.

Strategies:

- Arrange for a community mentor
- Tailored responses:
 - Child: "You don't understand."
 - Adult: "You're right – you can help me understand."
- Find out interests. Say, "What do you like doing?" Do an interest inventory and arrange opportunities to explore their interest(s).
- With this inventory, possibly piggy back and find other interests.
- Set short term goals
- Praise and provide encouragement
- Give teen input on rewards (gives them ownership)
- Take a TEAM approach
- Help teen develop realistic yet challenging goals (no more than 2 goals)
- Identify the pathways to reach those goals
- Develop appropriate coping skills to deal with emotions connected to following the pathways.
- Identify points of accomplishment and successes along the way
- Make a plan for rerouting pathways when set-backs occur
- Take a multi-disciplinary approach (i.e. Rodney was misidentified as mentally challenged. Turned out he had vision problems).
- Build assets
- Teen behavior and teacher solution:
 - Silent treatment: Timing – make available when she is ready
 - Angry/changing mental state: Use humor when appropriate
 - Frustration/lack of trust: Praise. Motivation. Patience