

problem solving with youth



/ RECOGNIZE

- As we walk with youth through difficult times we need to be intentional about choosing how much hands on support they need in the situation.
- Teens get to grow, heal and learn skills for the future as they take responsibility to manage the tough stuff in their life.

We need to assess what they need from us based on:

- What they've got: the coping skills, communication skills and problem solving skills they've shown they have
- What they're facing: the nature of the problem
- What's the risk: of violence or harm to them/others
- Who's standing with them: their existing supports

- There's a difference between a crisis (dangerous/can't be managed alone) and a predicament (uncomfortable/want someone to fix it for them).
- It may be easier to be the doer rather than the encourager, but assessing well & waiting patiently opens doors for the young person to gain strength and skills.

// REMEMBER

- It's easy to feel good about "fixing" things in young peoples' lives because that's what they often want you to do. Everyone wants to be rescued when they feel overwhelmed—but we can confuse rescuing with helping. While many teens may seem weak & disempowered, making the choices for them about what to do or even fixing the situation for them disempowers them even more, leaving them worse off.
- God isn't in the business of taking hard things away. He knows the value they can have in shaping us (James 1:2-4) and in drawing us to himself (1 Peter 5:7). If we jump too far and too fast into the issues people face, we rob them of discovering the gifts God may have for them as they work through the situation—including the gift of his sustaining presence.

/// RESPOND

- When teens are in a difficulty or dilemma, never do for them what they can do for themselves.
- Each situation is different. Don't use a one size fits all response to difficulties.
- Give the type of support that allows the teen to retain the greatest power of choice. Our level of involvement needs to match their ability to cope. Imagine your level of support on a continuum and choose your involvement with the situation based on their need:
 - Reporting—calling the authorities with or without the youth's permission to report a dangerous situation. Be the adult - do the hard thing.
 - Referral—choosing to involve professional assistance when you feel out of your league/ill-equipped. Trust the help that's out in the community.
 - Advocacy—standing up for a youth who feels disempowered & afraid to stand alone and making space for them to stand where they can.
 - Mediation—standing next to the youth as they deal with the situation.
 - Empowerment- equipping and coaching teens to gain the skills needed. Helping them discover the Holy Spirit as "the counsellor".
 - Encouragement—cheering them on to do what they know or try new ideas. Give them a vision for how God sees them and how you believe he's equipped them.
- After the situation is over, take time to talk about how they handled it and what you saw in them that was good and strong. Ask them if there was something they would do differently next time and whether you have permission to remind them of those things if they are facing a tough situation again.

//// RESOURCES

- <http://www.lifecoachintoronto.com/teens-long-term-consequences-of-avoiding-decision-making/>
- <https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/the-surprising-reason-for-bad-child-behavior-i-cant-solve-problems/>

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