

Session Four:

Training Wheels

*Exploring the Responsibilities of
Advisors and Adult Helpers*



Session Four: Training Wheels

Exploring the Responsibilities of Advisors and Adult Helpers

Facilitators Need to Know:

As a result of stereotypes and preconceived notions about youth, adults are often unable to provide what youth need in developmental experiences. It is very common for adults to go to extremes when working with youth—providing excessive or inadequate guidance, assuming that youth know less or more than they actually do, and giving them too much freedom or not enough freedom.

For adults to be effective guides for youth, they must learn to be open and trusting when working with youth. They must focus on providing and receiving clear communication and expectations. They must be willing to ask for youth input, take it seriously, and apply it to the overall experience in which the youth and adults are engaged. They must enter a youth/adult partnership not only as teachers, but also as students, recognizing that it is equally possible for adults to learn from youth as it is for youth to learn from adults.

It is necessary for adult leaders to recognize that they walk a fine line in their efforts to successfully empower youth. They must be able to evaluate situations and determine how much control youth should have, how much control adults should retain, and when it is/isn't appropriate to intervene. These decisions are not necessarily clear. They are based on specific situations, policy and procedures, comfort level, and instinct. Situations will be ever-changing. Comfort level and instinct may also change and refine over time.

Another important consideration, when trying to determine when to intervene and when to step back, will be the specific policies and procedures that your group has regarding personal safety and issues of liability. It is very important that adults who work with youth have a very clear understanding of the expectations your group has on these issues, because that will help them to make decisions about control and intervention.

Ultimately, what proves to be of greatest benefit to youth and adults is a partnership where each supports, challenges, and teaches the other. In order to achieve this relationship, communication, trust, clear expectations, and openness to learning are necessary—from everyone involved.

Session Objectives:

- Adult volunteers and professionals who work with youth will be able to identify the roles that youth expect adults to play in leadership development.
- Adult volunteers and professionals who work with youth will be able to distinguish between situations that require adult intervention and those in which youth should be given greater control.
- Adult volunteers and professionals who work with youth will be able to identify positive outcomes of youth/adult partnerships.

Total Time Needed: Approximately two hours and fifteen minutes of activities are recommended for this session. You will need to allow extra time for breaks and additional discussion.

Materials:

- LCD or Overhead Projector
- Power Point Slides or Transparencies (Master Slides 4.1 – 4.30)
- Easel & Flipchart
- Markers
- Masking Tape
- Nametags
- Notepads & Post-it Notes
- 8.5x11 Paper (white or a pale color)
- Stamped Envelopes
- Pens or Pencils
- Activity Sheets 4.1 – 4.3
- 50-100 multi-colored links (available in craft or toy stores)
- Bread
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly
- Plastic Knives
- Newsprint or Paper Towels (to cover table)

Room Set-Up:

- Round tables or chairs arranged in theatre style
- Chairs that can be re-arranged into circular work groups
- Extra chairs should be available at the front of the room for panel discussion
- Table and screen for LCD or overhead projector

- Access to electricity

Welcome/Icebreaker

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: Post-it Notes, Pens or Pencils, Flip Chart Paper, Masking Tape

1. Welcome participants.
2. Explain the purpose of the training session:

Welcome to today’s session, “Training Wheels.” During our time together, we will investigate the various roles and responsibilities that we have as adults working with youth. We will learn about the expectations that youth have of adults, the benefits of working with youth as partners, and we will develop strategies that will allow us to give youth training wheels in order to venture out on their own leadership journey.

3. Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine the first time they rode a bike—or achieved another significant accomplishment—without the assistance of an adult.
4. Give each participant a post-it note and ask them to record one thought, feeling, or image that they associate with that experience.
5. Ask each participant, in turn, to introduce themselves and tell the group what is written on their post-it note.
6. Place the notes onto a sheet of flip chart paper at the front of the room.
7. When the exercise is completed, keep flip chart on display for reference throughout the session.

<p>Expectations: Link Together</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p> <p>Materials: Pens or Pencils, Flipchart Paper, Masking Tape</p> <p>Activity Sheet: 4.1</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage participants in an activity which requires them to work together to accomplish a goal. Complete <i>Expectations: A Link Activity</i> from Activity Sheet 4.1.
<p>Communication: Making Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches</p> <p>Time: 15 minutes</p> <p>Materials: Newsprint or Paper Towels, Bread, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Plastic Knives (refer to activity sheet for specific information)</p> <p>Activity Sheet: 4.2</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask participants to select a partner. 2. Complete activity <i>Communication: Making Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches</i> from Activity Sheet 4.2. 3. De-brief using the following questions as a guide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you satisfied with the outcome? • Did you find anything difficult about this exercise? If so, what was it and what was it difficult? • What would have helped you to reach a more satisfactory outcome?

<p>What Youth Expect</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p> <p>Slides: 4.1 - 4.4</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review slides (4.1 – 4.4) which describe the expectations that youth hold for the adults with whom they work. 2. Emphasize that open communication and the articulation of expectations, from youth and adults, can help adult leaders to better understand their roles and responsibilities when working with youth.
<p>Common Mistakes</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p> <p>Materials: Flipchart Paper, Markers</p> <p>Slides: 4.5 – 4.12</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guide the group in brainstorming a list of responses to the question: “What are the most common mistakes adults make when they work with youth?” 2. Record the list on flipchart paper. 3. Compare and contrast the brainstormed list with the slides (4.5 – 4.9) containing a list of common mistakes. 4. Review slides (4.10 – 4.12) which list ways to help avoid these common mistakes.

Stepping Back

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pens or Pencils

Slides: 4.13 – 4.24

Activity Sheets: 4.3

1. Distribute *Step In or Step Back?* Activity Sheet 4.3 to each participant.
2. Ask participants to review the situations on their own and decide whether it requires them to step in or step back.
3. Review corresponding slides (4.14 – 4.22) which describe situations where youth can (and should) be empowered and given ownership.
4. Discuss each situation, the responses given by participants, and the factors that influenced their decisions.
5. Explain that there may not be “right” or “wrong” answers. Ideally, youth should be empowered as much as possible. Whether adults choose to step in depends upon their own comfort level, instinct, the characteristics of the youth with whom they are working, and the circumstances surrounding the situation. (Highlight slide 4.24)
6. Your group or organization may have specific policies and procedures related to personal safety and liability that adult volunteers and professionals need to be aware of. Take a moment to point these out and discuss them with participants.

Equal Partners / Open Discussion

Time: 40 minutes

Materials:

Slides: 4.25 – 4.30

Discussion Questions:

- Why do adults choose to work with youth in our community?
- Why do youth choose to engage in leadership development experiences?
- What are the common goals of youth and adults within the community?
- What are the perceived challenges, for adults, in working with youth?
- What are the perceived challenges, for youth, in working with adults?
- What are the advantages, for youth, in working with adults?
- What are the advantages, for adults, in working with youth?

1. Review slides (4.25 – 4.30) which contain information on the advantages of including youth and forming youth/adult partnerships.
2. Invite four to six youth leaders (club officers, school leaders, or someone who exhibits leadership characteristics) within the community to participate in interactive discussion with adult participants.
3. Use the discussion questions to the left as a guide.

Wrap-Up and Food for Thought

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: 8.5x11 sheets of paper, stamped envelopes

1. Review some important points from the session:
 - Youth need and appreciate an adult perspective.
 - Youth want to be trusted.
 - Youth want to be given a chance to act on their ideas.
 - There are situations where adults should intervene.
2. Give each participant a sheet of 8.5x11 paper and a stamped envelope.
3. Instruct participants to write their mailing addresses on the front of the envelope.
4. Ask participants to write themselves a letter describing what they have learned during the session and how they intend to use this new knowledge in their work with youth.
5. Instruct participant to fold the letter, place it in the envelope, and give it to you.
6. Thank participants for attending and ask if they have any additional comments or questions.
7. Mail letters back to participants anywhere from one to two weeks after the end of the session. This will serve as a reminder of the experience and encourage them to implement what they learned.