

What It's Like To Be A Teenager Today

Parent & Leader Discussion Guides

Dear youth leader,

Our team interviewed an amazing group of teenagers on camera as part of our latest research on [Gen Alpha](#). We put together some of their insights about what it's like to be a teen today into a short video you can use in your own setting, and created these two easy-to-use discussion guides: one to use with your ministry team and one to guide a parent event or small group.

If your group has more than 6–8 people, you might find it helpful to occasionally try different ways to get people talking. For example:

- *Everyone answers:* invite everyone in the room to answer. If your group is large, break into smaller groups first.
- *Pair & share:* ask people to turn to their neighbor and share their answer. Then ask a few to share with the larger group.
- *Listing:* use sticky notes or a whiteboard to capture what people say.

Adapt these discussions in ways that work for you, in whatever timeframe you have available. Choose the questions that will best get your unique group talking. You know your context better than we do.

We've also included a bonus resource: an email you can adapt and send to parents, either as a follow-up to a parent gathering or in place of one. Our Gen Alpha research consistently affirms how important parents are in young people's discipleship, and this email offers a simple, concrete way to encourage them to talk with their teenager.

We're with you, and we're cheering for you,

The FYI Team



What It's Like To Be A Teenager Today

Youth Ministry Team Discussion Guide

It can be difficult to understand teenagers, even the ones right in front of us. Our friends at the Fuller Youth Institute research young people and faith, and decided to ask some teenagers what it's like to grow up today. Let's listen to what those teens had to say and then talk about it.

Find the video: *What It's Like To Be A Teenager Today*
fulleryouthinstitute.org/gen-alpha/teen-today

Questions for discussion:

- Do you think being a teenager today is easier or harder than when you were a teenager? Why?
- What stands out to you about the teens' statements in the video? Why?
- One teenager shares, "I want adults to know that not all teenagers are bad." Think about the teens you know: What's a specific example that proves his point?
- Several say that adults tend to minimize their problems. Thinking about our own interactions with teens, how might we unintentionally minimize their problems? What do we say and do to communicate empathy?
- Another shared, "A lot of the time, adults forget we're in this world. We also feel what's going on around us. In the country, the world, our houses . . . it's a lot." What's currently impacting you, and how might those same things be impacting our teens? How can we help them process what's weighing on them?
- A teenager says, "Adults should know not to expect that as soon as you turn 13, you should act like a 19-year-old. Just because we're teenagers doesn't mean that we're not kids still." In what ways do you see the tension of "not kids but not adults" in our students?
- At the end, one teen remarks, "We're all exploring our faith." When it comes to faith, what are those in our ministry most eager to explore?
- Think about a student you're close with. What's a tangible way you can encourage them to keep nurturing their faith this week?
- One describes being a teen as "like a roller coaster. There's like those really low bits but then there's also the equally high parts." Paul writes in Romans 12:15 about love in action, saying, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (NIV). How might we mourn with teenagers during the really low parts of their lives and rejoice with them during the really high parts?

Let's close by praying for our teens and for one another as we all navigate the highs and lows of the teenage years.



What It's Like To Be A Teenager Today

Parent Group Discussion Guide

It can be difficult to understand teenagers, even the ones right in front of us. Our friends at the Fuller Youth Institute research young people and faith, and decided to ask some teenagers what it's like to grow up today. Let's listen to what those teens had to say and then talk about it.

Find the video: *What It's Like To Be A Teenager Today*
fulleryouthinstitute.org/gen-alpha/teen-today

Questions for discussion:

- What's one thing you find particularly confusing about your teenager?
- What stands out to you about teens' statements in the video? Why?
- No one in the video said they thought being a teenager was easy. Why do you think it's so hard to be a teen today?
- One teenager shares, "I want adults to know that not all teenagers are bad." Think about your teen: What's something good about them that you simply delight in?
- Several say that adults tend to minimize their problems. When your teen comes to you with a problem, what words or responses unintentionally suggest you're minimizing it? What could you do or say to signal that you take their problems seriously?
- Another shared, "A lot of the time, adults forget we're in this world. We also feel what's going on around us. In the country, the world, our houses . . . it's a lot." What's currently impacting you, and how might those same things be impacting your teen? How can you help process what's weighing on them?
- A teenager says, "Adults should know not to expect that as soon as you turn 13, you should act like a 19-year-old. Just because we're teenagers doesn't mean that we're not kids still." When do you tend to rush your teen to grow up? What helps you remember they're still a kid?
- At the end, one teen remarks, "We're all exploring our faith." Which aspects of faith do you see your teenager exploring? How can you help them nurture their faith?
- One describes being a teen as "like a roller coaster. There's like those really low bits but then there's also the equally high parts." Which part of the roller coaster do you think your teenager is currently on? Why?
- Paul writes in Romans 12:15 about love in action. He says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (NIV). How might you mourn with your teen during the really low parts of their lives and rejoice with them during the really high parts? How have you done this well in the past? Where have you struggled?

Let's close by praying for our teens and for one another as we all navigate the highs and lows of the teenage years.



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Parent Email

Dear parents,

As a youth leader, it's a privilege to see how much you love your teenager.

I see how you want to stay connected, even when they don't make it easy. You're figuring out when to ask questions and when to pause. You're discovering when to give advice and when they really, really don't want it. You're wondering if their latest friendship drama will blow over or if you need to step in. And you're learning to keep calm when they tell you something big so they'll tell you the next big thing, too.

What your teenager needs from you seems to change from day to day or even hour to hour. That's why I'm reaching out with a helpful tool.

Our friends at the Fuller Youth Institute research young people and faith, and decided to ask some teenagers what it's like to grow up today. I invite you to watch their answers in this short video:

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You may hear your kid in some of these teen's responses. You might listen to others and think, "Nope, not mine." Either way, I hope this video makes you curious about what your teenager would say and gives you an excuse to ask.

If you're not sure how to begin a conversation with your teen about what life is like for them today, here's a question to ask in the car or around the dinner table: *What do you wish I knew about what it's like to be you right now?*

It doesn't have to be a long conversation. And their answer may not be something you can or need to fix. If they shrug and respond with, "I don't know," that's okay too. Simply asking the question is a way of saying you care and you want to listen, whenever they're ready.

I hope this message gives you one small way to connect with your teen today.

As always, I'm grateful to be one of the people cheering you and your teenager on.

[ADD YOUR SIGNATURE HERE]

