

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Historical Materials from University of
Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Extension

2002

NF522 Teens Making Choices: Involvement is Important

Rosalie Bakken

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>



Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#), and the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Bakken, Rosalie, "NF522 Teens Making Choices: Involvement is Important" (2002). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 113.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/113>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Teens Making Choices: Involvement is Important

By Rosalie Bakken, Adolescent Development Specialist

As tomorrow’s leaders, teens need to know how to make safe, thoughtful and wise decisions. They need to have a sense of values to guide their decisions. They also need the skills and the confidence to stand up for decisions they know are right.

Parents and other adults can help teens develop these qualities by asking them to take part in important family, school and community activities. This gives youth the chance to work with adult leaders and learn from them. At the same time, teens have a lot of skills and talents to share, and their families, schools and communities will benefit by allowing youth to be involved in making important decisions.

Adults often will be surprised at how much teens can contribute to a project or decision. Teens can add energy, ideas and commitment. By working with adults on meaningful matters, teens learn a lot about decision-making, values and responsibility.

Are you encouraging your youth to be involved? Try these ideas:

- ◆ Involve your adolescent in making a family decision, such as
 - ❖ Purchasing a family car
 - ❖ Planning a vacation
 - ❖ Organizing a family party
 - ❖ Planning meals for the week
- ◆ Ask youth to help plan and lead school and after-school activities. Youth are much more likely to join clubs, teams and groups when they have been involved in planning the activity from the start.
- ◆ Ask youth to join community groups. Appoint teen members of coalitions, committees and advisory groups. Ask for their ideas, and follow through on ideas that are promising.
- ◆ Take a teen to a political or social event in the community and help him or her learn about it and participate. Examples are:
 - ❖ Election events
 - ❖ Rallies

- ❖ Marches
- ❖ Peaceful protests
- ◆ Look for chances to talk with teens about politics, spirituality and morals. These discussions may be planned or spontaneous. Here are some ideas:
 - ❖ The dinner table
 - ❖ In the classroom
 - ❖ After-school clubs
 - ❖ Youth groups in faith communities
- ◆ Invite and expect youth to take a “real” role in these groups and activities.
 - ❖ Ask for their ideas.
 - ❖ Assign tasks that will require youth to do research and learn new information.
 - ❖ Ask for their opinions, and then ask them to explain why they feel that way.
 - ❖ Hold youth accountable for their decisions and assignments.
 - ❖ Show appreciation and support for youth involvement.

Action Plan

Check items to create your own plan for increasing youth involvement.

In the next week, I plan to:

- _____ Talk with a teen about politics
- _____ Talk with a teen about spirituality
- _____ Ask a teen for his or her idea or opinion on an important matter
- _____ Ask teen in my community what issues are important to them

In the next month, I plan to:

- _____ Ask my youth to be involved in an important family decision
- _____ Suggest to my community group that we need a youth representative
- _____ Ask a teen to join a committee or group
- _____ Ask a teen to lead a committee or group

In the next three months, I plan to:

- _____ Invite a teen to a political event
- _____ Help youth in my community organize a new group around an important social cause that interests them, such as the environment or homelessness
- _____ Organize a program in my community to match younger teens or pre-teens with older teens as mentors
- _____ Organize a meeting for people in my community to plan other ways we can help youth make healthy, wise decisions

Source

Russell, S. & Bakken, R. J. (February 2002). *Development of Autonomy in Adolescence*. NebGuide G02-1449. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension.

UNL Extension publications are available online at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>.

**Index: Family Life
Adolescence and Youth**
Issued May, 2002

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

© 2002, The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska on behalf of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension. All rights reserved.