

MODULE

THE DREAM OF FAMILY

CHAPTERS

1. Importance
2. Purpose
3. Goals

This module encourages teens to envision their brightest possible future, with personalized goals that they find enticing and compelling. Crafting these dreams helps teens understand their lives in a broader context. They are better able to appreciate the long-term consequences of their decisions in the years prior to parenting. And by exploring their priorities and values, teens gain a sense of personal power in shaping their destinies.

CHAPTER 1

Importance

1a. Priorities

Workbook Page: 4

1. Importance

In taking charge of our lives, we make choices every day about what is important to us. Let's look at your overall life priorities, and then decide how parenting fits into your life.

a. Priorities - Here is how I rate these goals and priorities for me:
1 = Super Important, 2 = Would be Nice, X = Not a Priority for Me

RATING	
_____	Finish High School
_____	Finish College or Trade School
_____	Get a job that I like / pays well: _____
_____	Buy my dream car: _____

Goal

Teens will identify their priorities and sequence them.

Rationale

Beginning the workbook with a list of activities and desires familiar to many teens, teens will feel comfortable and excited as they begin crafting their personal goals.

Objectives

1. Identify personal goals with some level of detail.
2. Prioritize the goals.
3. Sequence the highest priority goals on a timeline.

Key message for teens

“Dream big and reach high.”

Teen comments



“I liked talking about our dreams.” – Male (15) at Newport Harbor High School

Instructor notes

After reading the instructions at the top of the page, guide teens through the rating system with the first few listed activities.

There are no right or wrong answers. These ratings are how you feel about each activity.

If finishing high school is super important to you, write a “1” in the blank space.

If you think finishing high school would be nice (but is not super important to you), write 2.

If finishing high school is not a priority for you, write an “X”.

Open responses for goals

The blank lines beside some of the listed activities (e.g., Job) are spaces for teens to fill in their personal wishes. The more detailed their vision and the more keenly they want it, the more likely teens will direct their efforts in the direction of their goals. This exercise also provides opportunities for stimulating discussion and exchanging ideas. Some teens who feel they must limit their expectations may need your encouragement to imagine goals that are beyond their past experience.

- **Job** – Teens can write down their current career interests, even if they are unsure this is what they want to do.
- **Dream car** – This prompt usually inspires animated discussion. Responses often range from “any car will do” to luxury automobiles with specific make, model, year, and color. Creative responses have included submarines, RVs, and space shuttles.
- **Travel** – This prompt is another teen favorite. You can supplement this prompt with travel brochures to help teens imagine what other locations are like.
- **Sleep in late on weekends** – Many teens enjoy their weekend sleep time. This is a good opportunity to point out how difficult that would be with an infant, if not impossible.
- **Other goal** – Feel free to mention other big goals that teens are seeking and achieving, such as playing in a rock band, competing in the Olympics, writing a first novel, auditioning for a TV talent/music show. If there are local teen celebrities, it’s good to mention them to reinforce the notion that these goals are possible to achieve.

Timeline

At the bottom of the page, ask teens to think about when they would like to accomplish their #1 goals, and to mark them on their timeline above the age they intend to achieve that goal. Teens can draw arrows from the list above, or they can write the goal above the age when they hope to reach it.

Group time management

If you have time constraints:

- **Priorities** - Call on only 2-3 teens to share their responses to the open-ended prompts.
- **Timetable** - Ask teens to only prioritize their top 3 priorities.

Example from an ESP student's workbook

Here is how I rate these goals and priorities for me:

1 = Super Important, 2 = Would be Nice, X = Not a Priority for Me

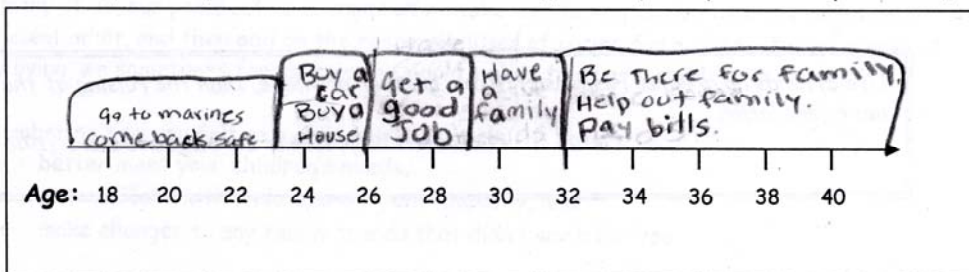
RATING

- 1. Finish High School or get a GED
- Finish College
- 1 Get a job that pays well
- 1. Get a job in a career that I like
- 1 Buy my dream car
- 1 Live in a place of my own
- 1 Kick back with friends
- 1 Flirt and date before I settle down
- 2 Travel (places I'd like to travel to: Hawaii)
- 1 Save up some money
- 2 Sleep in late on weekends
- 1 Help take care of my parents and family members
- 1 Enjoy the freedom of not having to answer to anyone
- 1 Get married
- 2 Have a pet
- 1 Parent a child
- 1. Other goal*: go to marines
- 1. Other goal: come back safe

*Other goals could include things like: Sing in a band, Learn to cook, Hike a mountain

The timeline I imagine for accomplishing my goals:

(Write your #1 goals on the timeline, over the age when you hope to accomplish them)



Male teen at an alternative school

1b. Parenting in my life-plan

Workbook Page: 5

b. Parenting in my life-plan

Thinking about all your goals, where does parenting fit in your life-plan?

Before parenting

Age: I think I would be ready to take on the responsibilities of raising a child when I'm about this age: _____

Before-parenting activities
Some activities can be more difficult to do with a child (e.g., travel), while others are almost impossible (eg, sleep in late on weekends). Are there some activities that you would like to enjoy or accomplish before you become responsible for a child?

Things I would like to do before I am responsible for a child:

-

Goal

Teens will specifically consider how parenting might fit in or affect their other goals.

Rationale

By prompting teens to consider how parenting might impact their other goals, they will be more thoughtful about when they want to start or to expand their family. And with a specific age in mind, they are likely to align their behavior to fulfill that intention.

Objectives

- Identify an age when they will be ready to care for their first (or next) child.
- List activities they want to accomplish prior to starting or expanding their family.
- Increase awareness of intentions.

Teen comments

"I learned there is a lot of stuff that I want to accomplish before having a child." -
Teen at Prentice School

Instructor notes

Teens only need to complete one half of this page – either the top half or the bottom half, - depending on whether or not they are already parents.

You can guide teens through the page and the prompts.

If you are not yet parenting, only complete the top half of this page. First, you will write down at what age you will be ready to raise a child. Then, you will list some of the activities you would like to do before you become a parent.

If you are already parenting, you will think about and write down how long you would like to wait before you have your next child. And then list what you hope to do before having another child.

For students who are not yet pregnant or parenting – “Before Parenting”

Among non-parenting teens, their responses about the age at which they would be ready to raise a child often range widely, from “now” to “never.” But most teens say they will be ready in their mid-20s. Responses about the activities they want to enjoy before having a child often shed light on a teen’s priorities and approach to life.

For pregnant and parenting teens – “Already Parenting”

For teens who are already pregnant or parenting, there is a separate section at the bottom of this page. Because teen parents are at high risk for having a second child before age 19, they are still in a pre-conception phase before a possible next child. This page guides these teens to start the planning process now, so they can postpone their next child until they have sufficient resources to care for a larger family.

Examples from several ESP students' workbooks

Things I would like to do before I am responsible for a child:

- "Get baby clothes and food for my family." – Male teen incarcerated
- "Be sober for a substantial amount of time on my own." – Female teen incarcerated
- "1. have a job, 2. have the right person, 3. have a great home, 4. have a car, 5. get married, 6. travel, 7. go to school." – Teen at Prentice School
- "Become financially secure and have time to please only me and get through selfishness." – Teen at Millbrook High School
- "Go to a four-year Division 1 college and become a very successful businessman and have my company go nationwide or worldwide." – Male teen at Estancia High School
- "Go to college, get a BMW 335i yr 2008, travel to Italy and Spain, become a family lawyer, get married, road trip!" – Female teen at Estancia High School

Things I would like to do before I am responsible for a child:

- Travel
- Stay out late with my friends
- Get settled in a career

Female teen at Millbrook High School

Facts to share

After the teens have made their age estimates, you can provide this information:

Did you know ...?

In the U.S. ...

- The average age when a mother has her first child is 26.0 years old.
- Only 10% of women have their first baby before age 19, and most of these pregnancies were not intended (77%, or 4 out of 5).

Sources:

Hamilton, Brady, Joyce Martin, Michelle Osterman, SC Curtin, and M.S. Mathews. 2015. Births: Final data for 2013. In *National Vital Statistics Report*. Hyattsville MD: National Center for Vital Statistics.

Mosher, WD, J. Jones, and JC Abma. 2012. Intended and Unintended Births in the United States: 1982–2010. In *National Health Statistics Reports*. Hyattsville MD: US Dept. of Health and Human Services, CDC, NCHS.

Key messages for teens

- Most people wait until adulthood before parenting. This is helpful benchmarking for those teens who are eager to start sooner or who have many friends and family members who are teen parents.
- Most teens who become parents did not intend to get pregnant. Maybe they hadn't given it enough thought or made a plan.
- In addition to a plan, it's important for actions and behaviors to match the goals.

GROUP ACTIVITY: See Appendix A at the back of this guide for the group activity "Poll - Predicted age for first child."