

WORKBOOK

My Life-Plan for Parenting

Discussion Guide



**Education for
Successful Parenting**

www.eduparents.org

With gratitude to my parents and grandparents

*For my children and
for all the children and families yet to be*

My Life-Plan for Parenting - Discussion Guide

This Discussion Guide is intended to aid adults (teachers, parents, and professionals) as they guide their teens' completion of the *My Life-Plan for Parenting* workbook. Both publications are components of the *Healthy Foundations for Future Families* curriculum published by Education for Successful Parenting.

About the organization

Education for Successful Parenting (ESP) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2008 to offer pre-parenting education to teenagers and young adults, and improve the well-being of future children and families. In addition to serving teens, ESP offers educational programs for parents of teens, pregnant and parenting teens, foster youth and their caregivers, and professionals who work with adolescents. ESP is an incorporated 501(c)3 organization Federal ID #26-2098947. Donations made to ESP support their vital work and are deductible for tax purposes.

Feel free to contact ESP at info@eduparents.org or by phone (949) 646-6016 if you are interested in receiving e-news and updates, special discounts for bulk purchases, or free technical support for your program.

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Credits

Author

Randi Rubenstein MSPH, Founder and Executive Director – Education for Successful Parenting

Ms. Randi Rubenstein founded Education for Successful Parenting (ESP) to assist adolescents in life-planning, enabling them to create stronger foundations and healthier beginnings for all children and families. Prior to ESP, she had senior-level roles in several health research and education organizations. Ms. Rubenstein earned a Masters of Science degree in Public Health from UCLA, and has a Bachelors degree in Sociology at University of Illinois. Inspired by her experiences as a foster and adoptive parent, and drawing upon her years of professional experience, Ms. Rubenstein offers a blend of health and planning perspectives to a new frontier of pre-parenting education.

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Supporters

We would like to thank the many teachers, schools, and programs who have welcomed ESP's curriculum into their classrooms with open arms. Special thanks to Michael Bargas who was the first teacher to host ESP, bringing us into two high schools in California. We also gratefully acknowledge Millbrook High School in Raleigh, NC and Heritage High School in Wake Forest, NC for their partnership with ESP.

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ESP's Board of Directors (current and past): Bret Greene, Dan Porper, Doug Fedich, Jeanne Zucker, Keri Gee Semmelman, Maria Barragan, Marlene Kohn, Patricia Yamate

Technical advisors and supporters

We are grateful to these universities and organizations for generously providing guidance:

- North Carolina State University – Dept. of Youth, Family, and Community Science, Raleigh, NC
- Prepare Tomorrow's Parents, Highland Beach, FL
- UCLA/RAND Center for Adolescent Health Promotions, Los Angeles, CA
- UNC Injury Prevention Research Center, Chapel Hill, NC
- USC School of Social Work, Irvine, CA

Praise for ESP's *Healthy Foundations for Future Families* program and the *My-Life Plan for Parenting - Discussion Guide*

Here's what teens are saying ...

"This program taught me essential skills that I'll need to be a good parent in the future. And I like that we can keep the workbooks for future guidance, which is great!"

-Female student, age 15
Millbrook High School

"I recommend ESP's program because every kid needs to be prepared to raise the next generation"

-Male student, age 15
Millbrook High School

Here's what teachers are saying ...

"ESP's programs have been presented to our incoming freshmen for four years, and the importance for our students has only grown. In a world inundated with technology, social media, and pressures beyond what they were two or three decades ago, our students need this guidance to consider how their choices can impact their future and change the course of their lives. I wholeheartedly recommend ESP's curriculum."

-Julee Dickens
department chair of healthful living at Millbrook High School

"Our faculty members are very thankful we are able to offer this program every year to all our students enrolled in Healthful Living. The curriculum includes important topics which need to be addressed with all teens before they take that next step in their journey. Now that there is a *My Life-Plan for Parenting – Discussion Guide*, every school can begin to implement this program and educate more teens. It is very beneficial in positively guiding youth in making important life decisions."

- Thomas Ferrara
healthful living instructor at Heritage High School

"Ms. Rubenstein has created a well-organized and intelligent workbook. Students feel the program is effective and it makes them think about future actions and their potential consequences."

-Michael Bargas
health education instructor at Estancia High School

"We teach students so many things in school academically, doing our best to prepare them for college. ESP's curriculum goes several steps deeper by preparing students for life! The *My Life-Plan for Parenting* workbook is something students can write in and keep for future use ... with very powerful insight into the preparation needed to be an effective parent in the future."

-Sylvia Jones
Healthful living instructor at Millbrook High School

Here's what parents are saying ...

"I wish all High Schools would make this a mandatory program. None of us grew up with making a conscious choice of when and how to become a parent and what kind of parent to be. No one teaches parenting until you are one. The forethought that goes into your program and that the kids are learning will be a boon to our society. "

-Marti Eisenberg
parent

"I am so thankful that ESP's program is at my son's high school! It fills a void that few have even acknowledged. Somehow we expect to break cycles of poverty and child abuse with academic and character education alone. ESP has recognized that we have to teach kids about what strong families look like, to nurture their dreams of a better life, and to show them they have control over their decisions and destinies. I wish this program could be part of every high school curriculum in the country."

-Tammy Wiles
parent

Here's what professionals are saying ...

"An excellent program to help teens think about their future and the ways having children will impact their goals. I love how the *My Life-Plan for Parenting – Discussion Guide* has examples of worksheets from youth who have used the accompanying Workbook. Just about every youth in the U.S. takes drivers education, but so few have the opportunity to participate in good parent education like this, which could make such a difference in the future of this country. I wholeheartedly endorse this excellent program."

-Dr. Andrew Behnke, Ph.D., CFLE
*associate professor at North Carolina State University
department of youth, family, and community sciences*

"I heartily endorse *My Life-Plan for Parenting – Discussion Guide*. It can be used by any adult – the teen's parent, teacher, counselor, or other instructors. Teens participating in this program will have a better sense of the power they have to make good, healthy choices for their future."

-Debbie Farr, Ph.D.
parent consultant & educator, founder of Flourishing Families

"This is a great curriculum that encourages adolescents to proactively start thinking about their life goals and the steps they need to take to achieve them. This *Discussion Guide* will improve the way we prepare teens for the responsibility of family life."

-Shelly Hummel, LMFT
marriage and family therapist

"Working with single-mothers, absent fathers, and fatherless children, I am keenly aware of the value of ESP's program to help our youth develop an intentional thought-process and parenting plan for future families. Faith groups, social services, community groups, and schools nationwide – should grab a hold of the flexibility of this curriculum to work it into the unique needs of their mission."

-Charmaine Yukawa
community volunteer, parent, and founder of SOULMUZAIC LLC

"ESP offers highly valuable information, insights and communication tools to help professionals work more effectively with at-risk teens during a critical stage in their development. The process of creating a healthy family begins in the decision-making of adolescents."

-Shekoufeh Markel
program manager at Orange County Children and Family Services

My Life-Plan for Parenting - Discussion Guide

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BACKGROUND

Understanding the context and curriculum

Why is it important for adults to talk with teens about parenting?

Sooner or later, today's youth will have children.

About 90% of the U.S. population become parents: over 82% give birth to children, and another 8% become parents through step-parenting, adoption, and foster parenting. More people become parents than go to college or drive a car.

It's important for teens to learn about parenting now so they can make healthier decisions and be better prepared to care for their future families. Parenting involves three basic responsibilities: to provide for, protect, and nurture a child. But in far too many instances, people have been entering into parenting unprepared, affecting the well-being of millions of children.

Will our teens choose the right time and the right partner for their life goals?

- The U.S. has the highest rates of teen pregnancy among industrialized nations.
- Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended.

Will they be prepared for the responsibilities and costs of parenting?

- Today 1 in 4 children are being raised without a father in the home.
- There are 15.8 million children (1 in 5) living in poverty in the U.S.

Will they know how to protect and nurture their children?

- Unhealthy adolescent lifestyles (smoking, binge-drinking, and obesity) can lead to preconception and prenatal risks affecting the lifetime health of their children.
- Abuse and neglect is reported for over 6,000,000 children every year.

The origins of many health and social problems affecting our children intersect in the decision-making of adolescents.

To improve children's lives, we must start educating young adults before they have a child.

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Education for Successful Parenting has a solution

Education for Successful Parenting (ESP) offers an innovative pre-parenting curriculum for the people who need it most – our youth – and at the time they need it most – before they conceive our next generation of children. By providing adolescents with information and life-skills, ESP is helping teens make healthy choices before forming a family.

ESP is a 501(c)3 non-profit founded by Ms. Randi Rubenstein, and she has over 20 years experience in health information and holds an MS in Public Health from UCLA. In addition to conducting programs for youth, ESP offers training programs for those who work with youth – including parents, social workers, educators, and psychologists.

ESP's goals

ESP is working to achieve two important goals through several objectives:

- Improve social and economic environments for families
 - Reduce teen pregnancy
 - Increase fatherhood involvement
 - Encourage personal life-planning and goal-setting
- Improve the overall health and capabilities of children
 - Reduce prenatal exposure to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco
 - Improve preconception and prenatal health
 - Prevent child maltreatment

