

Planning The Rest of The Trip

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop a positive vision for one's children and steps to take towards it.
2. Celebrate the learning and successes from participating in the program.

HANDOUTS:

1. *18 Years From Now ...*
2. *Certificates of Completion*

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

NOTE: You will want to use part of the session time to celebrate the completion of the program. It is recommended that you provide refreshments. You might ask participants to plan a meaningful celebration and to invite family members.

- Handout materials for participant workbooks—**Certificates of Completion** for class members
- Scrapbooking materials
- Flipchart and markers
- Pens and pencils



GETTING STARTED

At our last session, you learned about the challenges of forming a stepfamily and the steps you need to take to create a successful stepfamily. What additional thoughts did you have about stepfamilies since we last met?

Today's session is about celebrating the future of your family. We are not going to introduce any information or topic. Instead, you are going to have the opportunity to reflect on what you learned and celebrate the positive changes you have made.

ACTIVITY: Mini-Lecture on What You Have Learned

It is now time to take the skills you've learned in this program and put into a plan for you and your children's future. Throughout this program we have talked about what is in the best interest of your child or children when making choices about your relationships. You considered ways to:

- Build a strong family for your children to grow up in
- Make sure that both parents are involved in parenting your child in healthy ways
- Strengthen your adult relationships—as a part of a couple and as a co-parent
- Set goals and take steps to help you secure your children's future

Now it is time to pull all these ideas together. As you are aware, you have responsibility for your children until they are 18 years old. You will need support and help during every stage of your child's life. The way you raise your child depends in part on the choices you make as a result of this program. For example, if you decided not to marry your child's other parent or to stay romantically involved with him or her, you will have one path. It may include this person as a co-parent but you will most likely find another

couple relationship in the future. Or, you may not be able to include your child's parent in his or her life for various reasons.

You will want to work together to parent your child, even if you are not living together or do not get married. Both parents, if possible, need to create a family for their child. They need to talk to each other about their child's needs. They need to tell each other about their needs for support and help with the child.

Sometimes your child's other parent is not able to care for your child. He or she may be in prison or involved in unsafe activities. She or he may abuse you and/or your children. You may not know where he or she is. In any of these cases, safety is the most important priority. Also, you want to find someone who can act like a mother of father for your children.

ACTIVITY: 18 Years From Now ...

Imagine your child 18 years from now. What do you hope she or he is like? Look at the list of traits on the handout and pick the qualities you would like your child to have as an adult. Circle the ones that you would like to use to describe your child when he or she is grown. Feel free to add a few of your own to the list.

Once you have circled the five qualities you hope for your child, identify the top five and write them in the space provided. Then think about the questions that follow these top five qualities. They will help you think about what you can do to make these qualities a reality. Consider what you have learned in this program and write down these ideas.

Parents shape who a child is, and who she or he will become in the future. Take time to think about what you want your child to be like eighteen years from now so you can parent with purpose! Never underestimate how influential you are in your child's life.

Once participants complete the handout, have them prepare a scrapbook page that shows their commitment to build these qualities into children's lives. Have each participant share their scrapbook page as a part of the celebration.

CLOSING:

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Hold a celebration in which participants are honored for completing the program. Encourage them to invite family members and friends to attend.

18 Years From Now ...

Imagine your child 18 years from now. What do you hope she or he is like? Look at the lists below and pick the qualities you would like your child to have as an adult. Circle the ones that you would like to use to describe your child when he or she is grown.

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Educated | Caring | Hard-working | Smart |
| Generous | Strong-willed | Spiritual | Rich |
| Ambitious | Healthy | Artistic | Loyal |
| Creative | Responsible | Respectful | Funny |
| Religious | Resourceful | Patient | Kind |
| Honest | Self-sufficient | Dependable | Happy |
| Friendly | Reserved | Curious | Serious |

Others:

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.....

Pick the five that are most important to you.

1. 2. 3.

4. 5.

What are you doing now to make sure your child has these traits when he is grown?

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18 Years From Now ...

What are you doing that might discourage your child from becoming these things?

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Starting today, what are some things you can do to help your child learn these skills?

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1. I want my child to be, so I will:

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2. I want my child to be, so I will:

.....

3. I want my child to be, so I will:

.....

4. I want my child to be, so I will:

.....

5. I want my child to be, so I will:

.....

Parents shape who a child is, and who she or he will become in the future. Take time to think about what you want your child to be like 18 years from now so you can parent with purpose! Never underestimate how influential you are in your child's life.

