

# Young*Lives* Mentor Training Handbook



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# Mentor Training Guide

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# Young Life History and Philosophy

## Introduction to Young Life and YoungLives



### What Is Young Life?

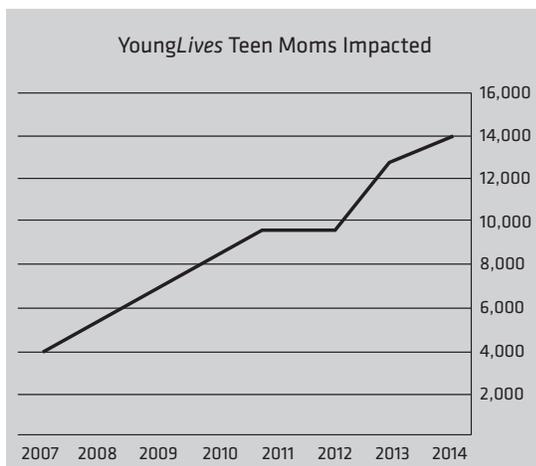
Young Life is a volunteer-driven, domestic and international missionary organization.

Founded in 1941 by Jim Rayburn, Young Life has grown into a worldwide ministry. As of 2016, Young Life leaders were making a difference in the lives of nearly 2 million kids in more than 100 countries around the globe.

Young Life doesn't start with a program. It starts with adults who are concerned enough about kids to go to them, on their turf and in their culture, building bridges of authentic friendship. Just as we might imagine missionaries traveling to distant lands to share the love and Gospel of Jesus Christ with those who don't know Him, we travel to the distant lands of teen culture to share the love and Gospel of Jesus Christ!

### What Is YoungLives?

YoungLives is Young Life for teen moms!

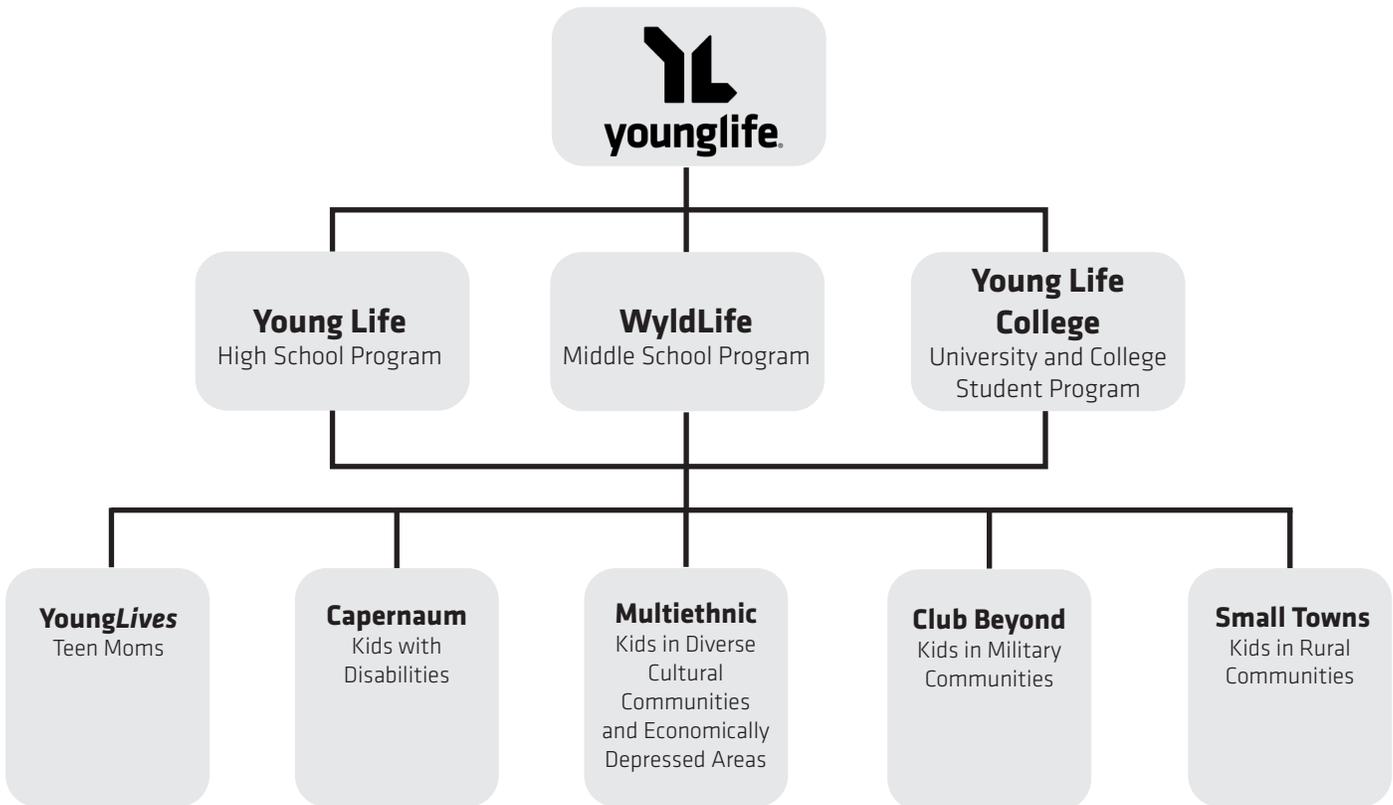


- In 1991, two Young Life areas saw a need for a special ministry to serve teen moms in their areas. Mentor Moms was launched in the fall of 1991 with the goals of providing Young Life club specifically for teen moms and matching the young moms with mentors.
- In December 2001, the ministry was renamed *YoungLives*.
- *YoungLives* camping ministry began in 2002 with an exclusive teen mom camp week at Lost Canyon.
- In 2014, there were over 240 *YoungLives* ministries, seven camp weeks exclusively for teen moms, and 14,000 teenage moms reached within one year.

## For Every Kid

Young Life is custom-made for kids throughout their adolescent years. Young Life is also the term we use for our program with high-school students, while we call our middle-school program WyldLife. Young Life College is for college and university students.

Throughout more than seven decades of ministry, Young Life leaders have developed a passion for and specific programs with groups of adolescents defined not so much by age as by circumstance. *YoungLives* is a perfect example of such a ministry making a difference in the lives of a unique and special group of adolescents. The original focused ministry in Young Life was our multiethnic outreach, which focuses on kids in diverse cultural communities and those in economically depressed areas. We refer to our ministry with kids with disabilities as Capernaum. In a partnership with Military Community Youth Ministries, Young Life reaches military teens through a program called Club Beyond. The Small Town initiative brings Young Life to communities of fewer than 25,000 people.



## Why is YoungLives Needed?

The need for YoungLives is great. According to a study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2012, one out of every 10 babies in the United States is born to a teenager. This makes the YoungLives mission field one that is ripe for harvest. Young Life's founder, Jim Rayburn, said, "All kids have the right to know the truth about Jesus Christ." YoungLives reaches vulnerable families with hope that transforms generations.



YoungLives is at the intersection of a great need and a desire to serve, bringing the two together with an effective strategy that brings hope and healing.

## Why Are Mentors Needed?

Young Life is a volunteer-driven ministry that equips volunteer leaders to go where kids are, engage in relationships with them, help run club and bring kids to camp. YoungLives mentors serve as Young Life leaders who take on the extra initiative of investing deeply and personally in one or two teen moms' lives.

Research has shown that mentors make a huge impact on kids' lives. Consider this quote: "At its most basic level, mentoring helps because it guarantees a young person that there is someone who cares about them. A child is not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges." (MENTOR)

Students who meet regularly with a mentor:

- Are less likely to skip a class or a day of school.
- Have lower rates of depression.
- Have higher social acceptance.
- Are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug/alcohol use.
- Have improved social relationships.
- Have increased trust and communication with parents.
- Have higher self-esteem.
- Have improved attitudes and behaviors at school.

(MENTOR)



# The Mentor's Role

## Purpose:

To present the Gospel of Jesus Christ incarnationally to teen moms so that they have the opportunity to know and respond to Him. *YoungLives* mentors serve as leaders for the whole group while also pursuing deep personal relationships with teen moms.

## Responsibilities (varies by area):

- Contact work — meet and befriend teen moms in your local area (at school, parenting classes), and pursue a deeper, more personal relationship with at least one teen mom.
- Club — regularly plan, attend, participate, and bring girls to monthly club.
- Training — attend monthly mentor training times and any required Young Life training.
- Camp — promote and attend (if possible) *YoungLives* summer camp.
- Campaigners — help lead, participate in, and bring girls to Campaigners Bible studies.
- Other Events — take moms and babies on field trips, to parenting classes and more.



## Support:

- You will be trained by the *YoungLives* coordinator.
- You will have regular fellowship with other mentors.
- You will be challenged to grow closer to Christ.

## Qualifications:

- Growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Desire to love, build a relationship with, and grow close to teen moms.
- Willingness to participate in training.
- Involvement in a local church.
- Willingness to make a minimum of a one-year commitment to pursuing teen moms.
- Completed Young Life Volunteer Application.
- Completed Mentor Covenant (available on Staff Resources).
- Completed Faith and Conduct Statement.
- Approved Driver Questionnaire.
- Approved Background Check.

# Young Life C's

## Young Life C's:

- Club
- Camp
- Campaigners
- Contact Work

YoungLives pursues, invites, and builds relationships with lots of teen moms who may not be interested in or ready for mentoring relationships yet. So along with preparing for one-on-one relationships, we also need to prepare to be leaders who engage in contact work and build relationships with all of the teen moms in our clubs. Over time, you will hopefully also establish deep relationship with one or two teen moms. But your first priority is to pursue, welcome, and build relationships with **all** of the teen moms we encounter.

## Club



The goal of YoungLives club is to offer teen moms all of the elements of a typical Young Life club with the addition of childcare and a meal. Regardless of how big or small the group is, club is a friendly, fun, family-like atmosphere where teen moms can hear a clear and compelling presentation of the Gospel by a mentor who has invested in their lives. Mentors work as a team with the coordinator to plan, coordinate and run club.

### *Music*

Using appropriate secular music that the girls recognize and enjoy helps them to let their guard down and shows them that you value them where they are. It also pulls the group together and sets the mood and pace of club. Enthusiasm from all of the mentors in the room is the key to good club music!

## ***Mixers***

A mixer is an activity that the group does together or in team competition. It creates unity as a group and breaks down walls. The non-verbal message of a mixer is “we are all in this together.” We are seeking to bring the “furthest-out” girl into the group. Our willingness to become foolish speaks volumes. (Examples: pass the grapefruit under the chin, people bingo).

## ***Games***

A game is a silly competition that just a couple of kids participate in while everyone else cheers them on. YoungLives clubs use the same games that Young Life clubs use, because teen moms love to laugh and have fun just like any other teenager. Games celebrate kids and give them something to remember. It is often the most talked-about part of club! (Examples: pie-eating contest, dance-off).

## ***Run-Ons***

A run-on involves a couple of mentors dressed as silly characters who repeat a few memorized taglines and introduce a game, give an announcement, or just make everyone laugh. The characters interrupt the flow of club with an entrance song and exit to another theme song. The same characters often return for several weeks so that kids start to expect them and can even say their taglines along with them. Run-ons can be used to promote an event, make a funny point, introduce a game, or just to show that life with Christ can be fun.

## ***Club Talk***

Young Life’s founder, Jim Rayburn, said, “It’s a sin to bore a kid with the Gospel.” The purpose of the club talk is to reach the furthest-out teen mom by presenting the Gospel in a compelling and understandable way. Everything else we do during club breaks down the barriers so that girls are ready to hear the club talk. The club talk is THE most important part of club.

A segment of the Gospel is shared at each club so that the whole Gospel unfolds in a year.

- Introduction — usually includes an invitation to kids to “stick with us” as we consider who Jesus really is.
- Creation/Person of Christ — usually highlights the Incarnation — “the Word became flesh.”
- Need/Problem — discussion of our common “sickness” as humans; brokenness of the world.
- Sin — the cause of our “sickness.”
- The Cross — God’s solution to our dilemma.
- The Resurrection — proof and confirmation that Christ is credible.
- Life with/Commitment to Christ — an authentic look into what life in Christ looks like.

## **Additional YoungLives Club Elements**

### ***Childcare***

YoungLives clubs always provide childcare. Often, everyone eats dinner together first, and then the girls drop their children off before club starts.

### ***Dinner***

Because YoungLives serves moms and their children, we serve dinner (or an after-school snack) at club. Some clubs set up a rotation of church small groups to bring in a home-cooked dinner, some have a volunteer or group of volunteers who make dinner for every club, and others have food donated by local restaurants.

### ***Transportation***

Many clubs find that the teen moms they serve don't have reliable transportation. This often means that mentors and committee members pick up one or two girls for club and take them home afterward. Some areas hold their club near the high school, on a bus line, by a metro/train station, or within walking distance of the neighborhoods where the majority of their teen moms live. Anyone who provides transportation needs to complete the Young Life Driver Questionnaire on the Staff Resources site.

### ***Baby Supplies (optional)***

Although it is not necessary to give away baby supplies at YoungLives club, donations of diapers, baby clothes, and car seats often start coming in as soon as the community hears about YoungLives' work with teen moms. Some clubs set aside a storage unit, supply closet, or basement for donations and give supplies out after club or on an as-needed basis. (Since it is so time-intensive to manage donations of baby supplies, some YoungLives areas do not include this as part of their ministry).

### ***Crafts (optional)***

Girls love to make things with their hands, and it creates a relaxed environment for getting to know each other and the mentors. YoungLives clubs may use crafts (making baby items, holiday decorations, photo frames, scrapbook pages) as an icebreaker when girls first arrive, as a transition between dropping off their children and starting club, or at the end of club as a time for mentors and girls to discuss the club message.



## Club Tips

### *Be welcoming!*

- Create an atmosphere that is friendly, relaxed, safe and neutral.
- Greet teen moms and their children by name as they come into club.
- Engage teen moms in conversation.

### *Participate with the teen moms.*

- Show teen moms how to have fun at club! Don't let the girls' attitudes lead club — you lead with energy and enthusiasm.
- Don't congregate in groups of mentors. Instead, take the initiative to engage with girls.
- Participate in everything — play, sing, laugh, listen!

### *Use club to initiate conversations and one-on-one time.*

- Write new kids' names down and follow up with girls who came to club for the first time.
- Talk with girls about the talk during the drive home or later in the week. The drive home can be great follow-up/processing time for them.
- Use club as a time to set up contact time with kids later in the week.



## Camp



Teen moms attend camp with their babies and leaders. *YoungLives* camping provides teen moms with the opportunity to have fun and act like a teenager again while they hear and grasp the Gospel in a new way. The relationships built at Young Life summer and weekend camps play a major role in creating momentum once girls return home.

### **Differences in *YoungLives* Camping**

#### ***Children***

- We accommodate the children of teen moms, in addition to the campers themselves, by providing quality childcare for infants and toddlers up to 48 months of age.
- Nurseries are set up throughout camp (in lobbies, cabins, meeting rooms).
- The camp facility is equipped with nursery equipment, high chairs, strollers, pack n' plays, and other baby supplies.

#### ***Childcare***

- Childcare volunteers pay or fundraise their own way to serve at *YoungLives* camp for the week.
- Childcare volunteers have their own club, and they participate in some of the group activities during the week along with watching the children.
- Childcare is provided during scheduled activities. Moms and their children eat meals together, sleep in the cabins together and have free time together in the afternoon.

#### ***Mentors***

- Mentors go to camp with teen moms and participate in all of the camp activities alongside teen moms.
- Just like in contact work and club, mentors serve as leaders for the whole group, not just for one teen mom.
- A ratio of at least one leader for every three teen moms is recommended at camp.

## *Schedule*

- The camp week is typically six days long.
- The program and schedule are adjusted to a slower pace, allowing time to move from activity to activity with babies, and providing moms with more time with their children.
- Certain camp events and “rides” are adapted to better fit an all-girl camp that includes pregnant girls.
- The assignment team and speaker are specifically chosen to best meet the needs of this audience.
- There are limitations regarding the age of campers, the age of babies, second-timers, and pregnant campers at *YoungLives* camp. (See the *YoungLives* Camp Toolbox on the Staff Resources site for more details).

## *Leading Teen Moms to Christ*

Teen moms will have many opportunities to hear the Gospel proclaimed at club and camp, but often the most effective form of evangelism is one-on-one. Don't assume that teen moms will hear and respond to the Good News when it is proclaimed in a group setting. Always be aware of opportunities to ask them questions about what they heard, what they think, and how they might want to respond. Mentors are the best people to engage teen moms in real conversation about what it means to follow Jesus!

- Be led by the Holy Spirit, trust Christ and be sensitive to His prompting.
- Use the foundation you have built by spending consistent time and being there for girls.
- Don't be afraid to verbally proclaim Christ; pray for courage if you are afraid. The best thing we have to offer them is a relationship with Christ. Don't stay too long in one place in your relationships.
- Use camp, clubs, and Campaigners to encourage more serious talks about Christ, but don't rely on them to proclaim the Gospel to the girls you know best.
- Ask lots of questions! Ask them what they thought of the club talk, whether they need prayer for anything, what questions they could ask God if they could ask Him anything, how they feel like they have changed since they started coming to *YoungLives* ... .
- Read the Bible together.
- Invite teen moms to visit church with you.



## Discipleship and Campaigners

Decisions to follow Christ are just the beginning. Our prayer is that after teen moms encounter Jesus Christ in a real way, they will learn to let Him transform how they love themselves, their family, their friends, and their world. Below are our discipleship values — the four core values that we hope every teen mom will internalize during her time in *YoungLives*.

### Self

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

I am a new creation in Christ, forgiven and loved by God, and I know that He has a plan and purpose for my life.

### Child

*Proverbs 22:6*

My child is a gift from God, created for a God-given purpose, and I will train my child to know and follow God.

### Others

*Ephesians 4:32*

I am a treasured child of God who deserves to be treated with dignity, love, and respect, and I will treat others in the same way.

### World

*Ephesians 5:1-2*

I will be a source of life, hope, love and service to others just as Christ loved me and gave His life for me.

## Campaigners

Campaigners is Young Life's main discipleship method. It is a discussion-based Bible study for kids who are seeking to know more about Jesus and how to build a relationship with Him.

In most aspects, *YoungLives* Campaigners is no different than Young Life Campaigners. However, we make a few changes to accommodate the unique needs of teen moms and their children. For instance, *YoungLives* Campaigners groups usually meet less frequently — often only once or twice a month, rather than weekly. We also accommodate childcare needs and often provide a meal or a snack.

### A few Campaigners tips:

- Make sure that teen moms are doing the majority of the talking. Try not to fill in “dead space” with your own remarks.
- Never tell what you can ask. Kids are much more likely to remember a truth they thought of themselves. Ask open-ended questions to avoid “yes” and “no” answers.
- Practice active listening. Repeat back what a girl has said to acknowledge that you heard her. Help fit her response into the big picture of what the study is about.
- Pray together.

## Other Discipleship Methods

There are several other forms of discipleship that happen in *YoungLives*:

### *Church Attendance*

The best way to invest in the long-term spiritual health of teen moms is to connect them with a church! It is crucial that mentors invite teen moms to their churches and/or visit other churches with teen moms. It is particularly helpful to invite teen moms into small groups that will help them get plugged in to the life of the church.



### *Mentoring*

Mentoring is potentially the greatest avenue for discipleship because of the ability to “do life” together and think through choices together. Consider doing a book study or Bible study together, setting goals together, going to church together or serving in the community together.

### *Setting Goals*

Setting goals is a simple way to motivate girls to move forward, give ourselves something specific to work on with teen moms, create a culture of dreaming about the future, and celebrate girls’ successes publicly. Consider setting specific goals at the beginning of a month or a quarter, working together to achieve the goals, and then celebrating and debriefing at the close of the set time period. When groups of mentors and teen moms create goals together, it creates momentum and excitement!

### *Service Opportunities*

Taking a few teen moms (without their children) to do work crew at a Young Life weekend camp or Leadership Weekend can be a tremendous growth opportunity. They get to experience service and leadership from a whole new perspective, and they have the chance to engage in discipleship-oriented conversation without distractions. If a whole weekend is too daunting, consider volunteering as a group at a homeless shelter or food pantry. Any service project can help put things into perspective, clarify priorities, and teach valuable lessons about thankfulness and leadership.

### *Junior Leadership*

Many YoungLives areas set up a way for older or graduated teen moms to serve side by side with YoungLives mentors. This not only teaches them about the responsibilities and expectations of being a mentor, but it also helps them to grow in their relationship with Christ, provides a way to hold girls accountable, and gives them a chance to gain confidence and leadership skills. Some ways for teen moms to serve can include set up/clean up, dinner, childcare or program. Continue mentoring these girls and investing in them as much as possible.

## Meeting Teen Moms: Contact Work

YoungLives uses the same relational, incarnational philosophy of ministry that has driven Young Life since its inception. This method of ministry is referred to as contact work and consists of going where kids are, building relationships with them, and earning the right to be heard.

Tom Hammon, senior Young Life regional director, says this about contact work: “There are an enormous number of Christian programs that say, ‘Come to us.’ Contact work puts the leader out there with kids. It puts flesh on the Gospel. It’s the most authentic you can get — the life of a person who goes into the world of lost kids.”

Contact work isn’t just Young Life’s invention — it is based on the example of Jesus Himself, as we see in John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.” (The Message)

### Levels of Contact Work

YoungLives mentors participate in all three levels of contact work:

**1) Being Seen:** The first level of contact work involves going to events, being seen and meeting pregnant or parenting girls.

YoungLives often makes initial contact with teen moms in a school specific to teen moms, through a school’s counseling or nurse’s office, through a pregnancy resource center, or through other programs that are already serving teen moms (such as high school daycares and parenting classes). Many YoungLives ministries offer to host a lunch club for pregnant and parenting girls in an empty classroom or office during the school’s lunch periods. YoungLives mentors bring in lunch and prepare a few discussion questions, mixer, and/or a parenting topic, and the administrators invite girls to attend during their regular lunch period. Lunch club is not a replacement for a full club meeting, which meets outside of school hours and includes the proclamation of the Gospel.

Any time you have the chance to take part in a parenting class or lunch club, take advantage of the time that you have to get to know the girls personally. Follow up individually with teen moms by phone or in person soon after meeting them.

**2) Hanging Out:** We don’t need to spend too much time “being seen” before moving on to the next level of contact work, which involves making plans to hang out with a specific teen mom or group of teen moms (e.g., taking kids to the park or going shopping).



As early as possible, it is important for teen moms to spend time with mentors. If the coordinator takes on too much of the contact work herself, teen moms will attach themselves to her and may have a difficult time developing deep relationships with other mentors.

**3) One-on-One Time:** The highest level of contact work involves consistently spending time with a specific teen mom or small group of teen moms. This is where mentoring takes place! At this level, mentors can work toward making relationships more consistent, deep and purposeful.

#### **A few important tips about contact work:**

- **Pray a lot.** Your personal walk with Christ is very important to contact work.
- **Notice them.** Notice something unique/special about teen moms and then tell them what you noticed!
- **Ask questions and listen.** Listen at least twice as much as you talk.
- **Don't talk about yourself.** Avoid making comments about your own life.
- **Avoid giving advice.** Don't try to give advice before you have earned the right to be heard. Unasked-for advice is usually seen as criticism!
- **Share Jesus.** Be thinking about how you can communicate Christ's love to girls.
- **Share life.** Invite a girl to be part of your daily routine.
- **Communicate often.** Use text messages, the phone, Facebook and more to keep in touch when you can't see girls in person.
- **Go to them.** Be willing to penetrate the culture. Going to a school/home/neighborhood and getting to know a girl's family and friends communicates value to her!
- **Be persistent!** It's not always easy or quick to build new relationships. It takes time — so keep at it!

# Principles for Effective Relationship Building

There are a few key principles for us to keep in mind as we develop relationships with teen moms. These principles will ensure that our relationships with teen moms stay healthy and effective.

1. **Check Your Motivations.**
2. **Maintain Boundaries.**
3. **Know How to Help Teen Moms Grow.**
4. **Take Care of Yourself.**

## Check Your Motivations

Having appropriate motivations is one of the key factors that determine whether our relationships with teen moms will be successful and effective. Let's look at a few common motivations that can lead to disillusionment, discouragement and burnout.

Wrong motivations	How could that <i>possibly</i> go wrong?	When expectations go unmet ...
It makes us feel good to help.	It doesn't always feel good to spend time with hurting people, to give yourself for someone else's goals, or to be inconvenienced by someone else's immaturity!	When it stops "feeling good" to help, we pull back or even quit.
We want to rescue hurting girls and change lives.	We are looking for the "rescue" and the "change" – but the change we are looking for often happens imperceptibly and over a long period of time, like a seed growing underground before it sprouts.	We get discouraged by the mountains of problems that teen moms face, and we feel disillusioned. We start to think that we aren't making any difference at all.
We were in a similar situation and want to give back.	We may attempt to take the solutions that worked for us and try to apply them to a new situation, assuming that it will help without really listening to this girl, in this situation.	We get frustrated that this mom isn't responding the way we did, and we start thinking "Well, when I was in her situation ... ." Instead of listening to her, we start to be resentful and even angry at her.

**The only right motivation is to glorify God and to serve Him by serving others.** When we truly believe that God is the one at work in teen moms' hearts, and that our role is simply to be obedient to Him, it takes the burden off of us to change the world on our own.

# Maintain Boundaries

The second key that will determine the health and effectiveness of relationship with teen moms is the presence or absence of healthy boundaries.

As we look at the lives of teen moms, we see needs everywhere — and it can be tempting to want to try to fix every need. **But if we are driven by the needs that we see, we will quickly be overwhelmed and may even burn out.** To help us remember not to let needs dictate our actions, it might help for us to see ourselves as coaches for teen moms. We seek to inspire them, push them to be their best, help them set and achieve goals, and ultimately, point them toward the only true Source of strength — Jesus.

## Trauma Triangle

God has a design and purpose for human relationships, but sin affects our relationships so that they do not always reflect God's intentions. Teen moms sometimes only see three roles that they and the people around them can play: **Abuser**, **Victim** and **Rescuer**. It is tempting for the mentor to take on the role of Rescuer, and for teen moms to view themselves as victims. However, teen moms need to learn to depend on Jesus, the perfect Savior, not on us. We also know that through Jesus, teen moms can be overcomers, not victims. If we want to change the trauma triangle, we need to play a new role as God's Ambassador. As **God's Ambassador**, our role is to help teen moms to see themselves as **Overcomers**, and to point them to Jesus as the only true Rescuer and **Savior**.



(Johnston, 2010)



## Rescuer vs. God's Ambassador

Rescuer Mentality:	God's Ambassador Mentality:
You are trying much harder than your mentee is to find resources or solve problems, and you have expectations of the results your time "should" produce in her.	Instead of taking responsibility yourself, you turn it on her: "I can't do this for you, but is there something I can do to help you?"
You find yourself wanting to fix problems that your mentee tells you about so much that you may make promises that you can't keep (e.g., I'll find you a place to stay).	You empathize, listen and ask helpful questions, but you don't feel obligated to "fix" everything.
You often feel tired, burdened and resentful because so much of your personal energy is tied up in the welfare of someone else.	You take care of your own needs and trust God to take care of the needs of teen moms.
You feel guilty, personally rejected or like a failure when teen moms make bad decisions, and you take the credit when they make good decisions.	You give teen moms the freedom to make their own mistakes and you don't take it personally whether they succeed or fail.



# Know How to Help Teen Moms Grow

It is possible to establish a relationship between a young person and an adult that makes a difference without crossing boundaries. There are two essential principles to helping teen moms grow that we will discuss here. The first is strengths-based ministry, and the second is resiliency.

## Strengths-Based Ministry

The first principle that helps teen moms to grow is to view them through the lens of their potential, their gifts and their strengths, rather than through the lens of their past, their issues and their deficiencies.

**Problem-based ministry** means trying to define the problem and then apply an expert solution to fix the problems (or person).

**Strengths-based ministry** focuses instead on the individual strengths and capacity of each person, coming alongside as a support system, rather than as an expert with solutions to every problem. Instead of picturing a teen mom as helpless and unable to do things for herself, or believing that she needs us, we recognize her individual gifts and strengths, and we make every effort to encourage those and capitalize on them.

In an article titled “Principles of Strength-Based Practice,” Wayne Hammond writes:

*There is nothing new about the observation that challenge is ever-present in most communities. What is new is the clear evidence that children and families in complex communities cannot only be resilient, but thrive in the face of adversity and the labels placed upon them. It is an invitation for community members and care providers to view children and their families as “having potential” as opposed to just being “at risk.” ... A strength-based paradigm ... allows one to see opportunities, hope and solutions rather than just problems and hopelessness. Embracing a strength-based paradigm encourages seeing beyond the risk behaviours and characteristics of children, youth and families in high-need communities to the potential of what can be.*

(Hammond, 2010)

Having a strengths-based perspective when working with teen moms means:

- 1) Believing that every teen mom has potential.
- 2) Investing in authentic relationships, because true change happens when teen moms know that someone is supporting and challenging them — not trying to fix them.
- 3) Encouraging teen moms to invest in themselves, set goals for themselves and dream about the future — rather than doing all of the investing, goal-setting and dreaming for them.
- 4) Treating teen moms with respect and compassion.
- 5) Helping teen moms to develop resiliency — by helping them to confront obstacles, have realistic expectations, develop a positive self-esteem and build on their strengths.

(Hammond, 2010)

## Resiliency

The second principle to understand in helping teen moms grow — resiliency — reminds us that people can and do “bounce back” from difficult circumstances, and that this is an ability that can be cultivated over time. Resilience is an especially important concept for those of us working closely with teenage moms who have come out of (or are still in) dark and hurtful situations.

In a series called “This Emotional Life,” PBS describes resilience this way:

*Resilience is the capacity to withstand stress and catastrophe. Psychologists have long recognized the capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity. Individuals and communities are able to rebuild their lives even after devastating tragedies.*

*Being resilient doesn't mean going through life without experiencing stress and pain. People feel grief, sadness, and a range of other emotions after adversity and loss. The road to resilience lies in working through the emotions and effects of stress and painful events. (PBS.org, 2011)*

Resilience is not something that you are just born with or not. It is something that can be developed over time, through better thinking and through positive relationships.

Below is a list of factors that can help increase the level of resilience in a person, according to PBS:

- Close relationships with family and friends.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- The ability to manage strong feelings and impulses.
- Good problem-solving and communication skills.
- Feeling in control.
- Seeking help and resources.
- Seeing yourself as resilient (rather than as a victim).
- Coping with stress in healthy ways and avoiding harmful coping strategies, such as substance abuse.
- Helping others.
- Finding positive meaning in your life despite difficult or traumatic events.

(PBS.org, 2011)

It is important for coordinators, mentors, volunteers and teen moms to know that every teen mom can develop resilience and can have hope for the future. God still has a plan and purpose for each teen mom. He has not given up on them just because they have been hurt or broken by circumstances, and neither should we!





## Take Care of Yourself

Finally, effective and successful mentors take good care of themselves — because nobody wins when mentors are burned out! And not surprisingly, the most at-risk groups for burnout and discouragement, or “compassion fatigue,” include women, young people, and those with a history of abuse or traumatic events in their past. This means that many *YoungLives* mentors are at high risk for developing compassion fatigue.

The Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project gives this descriptive summary of the issue:

*Affecting positive change in society, a mission so vital to those passionate about caring for others, is perceived as elusive, if not impossible. This painful reality ... takes its toll on everyone from full-time employees to part-time volunteers. Eventually, negative attitudes prevail. ... Leading traumatologist Eric Gentry suggests that people who are attracted to care giving often enter the field already compassion fatigued. A strong identification with helpless, suffering, or traumatized people or animals is possibly the motive. It is common for such people to hail from a tradition of what Gentry labels: other-directed care giving. Simply put, these are people who were taught at an early age to care for the needs of others before caring for their own needs. ... If you sense that you are suffering from compassion fatigue, chances are excellent that you are.*

(Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, 2013)

*Effective and successful mentors take good care of themselves.*



All hope is not lost, however! Awareness can go a long way toward preventing burnout and discouragement. Simple things like exercising, keeping healthy boundaries, participating in social activities, laughing, maintaining balance, eating right, getting good sleep, and refocusing on Jesus rather than dwelling on circumstances all play a huge part in helping us to stay healthy.

Aside from practicing good physical self-care, here are a couple of strategies for mental self-care to remember when you feel discouraged or hurt in your relationship with a teen mom:

1. **Reframe your definition of success.** Success is not in what “results” you see in a teen mom. Success is in whether or not you are obedient to demonstrate Christ’s love to her!
2. **Remember that you cannot know what is going on in her head!** Your perceptions of your relationship with a teen mom will be different from her perceptions.
3. **Remember that our ministry is one of seed planting.** Sometimes it takes years and years for the seeds to sprout! You are a crucial part of God’s long-term process.
4. **Know that we can never solve all of a girl’s problems, and we won’t be there for them forever.** Ultimately, our goal is to bring hope to teen moms, and to point them to the One who can walk with them through every difficulty they face throughout life.



# Developing and Maintaining Deep Relationships



As we have discussed, the primary role of every mentor is to be a leader for the whole group: to engage in contact work, welcome all of the teen moms who attend, and to participate fully in training and group events. But as you get to know teen moms, we encourage you to look for the chance to take relationships deeper by mentoring one or two teen moms.

## Starting a Mentoring Relationship

There is no formal “matching” process for mentoring relationships in *YoungLives*. It is an organic process that grows out of contact work and time spent pursuing relationships with lots of teen moms. Eventually, you may notice that one or two of the teen moms you have been pursuing start to open up to you more or become more receptive to you. That’s a good sign that you can take your relationship deeper!

**Take Initiative.** It is important for mentors to take initiative in building friendships with teen moms — by starting conversations, exchanging contact information, and arranging to hang out one-on-one.

**Take Your Time.** Not all teen moms will want a mentor or be ready for a mentor. Take your time building friendships with teen moms and don’t rush into a mentoring commitment. Over time, you will start to notice certain teen moms who seem more open, more interested, and more ready to build a deeper relationship. And if you never establish a one-on-one relationship, that’s OK too! What is important is that you are a consistent reflection of Christ, that you intentionally pursue teen moms and that you remain available for the Holy Spirit to use you.

**Take It Seriously.** As your friendships with teen moms deepen, let your *YoungLives* coordinator know about your progress. In some cases, it may be helpful to discuss with the teen mom what it means to have a mentoring relationship (including meeting weekly and committing to the relationship for a year). Research shows that the most effective mentoring relationships last for at least one year.

## Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

Once a mentoring relationship has begun, it will typically go through three main stages.

### Stage 1: Developing Rapport and Building Trust

- **Discuss Expectations**

It's helpful during Stage 1 to take the time to talk about your expectations. Consider asking questions such as:

- What do you think a mentor should do for you?
- What kinds of things do you hope we can do together and talk about?
- What are some of your short-term goals?
- What are some of your long-term goals?
- What difference do you want to see in your life when this year is over?

- **Predictability and Consistency**

It is always important to be predictable and consistent, but it is especially critical during this first stage. Consistency is necessary to build trust, even if the teen mom is not as consistent as you are.

- **Testing**

Teenagers often do not trust adults. As a result, they use testing as a coping or defense mechanism to determine whether they can trust you. A teen mom might test the mentor by not showing up for a scheduled meeting to see how the mentor will react. It is important for the mentor to maintain patience and kindness, and not to take this behavior personally.

- **Establish Confidentiality**

The mentor should let the teen mom know that whatever she wants to share with her will remain confidential, as long as what the young person tells the mentor is not going to harm her or someone else. If you do find out about abuse of a teen mom or her child, talk to your coordinator right away. She will contact Human Resources at the Service Center to find out about your state's policies on reporting and what steps to take next.

### Stage 2: Overcoming Obstacles and Reaching Goals

Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into the next stage. During this stage, the mentor and teen mom may encounter difficulties. If they overcome them successfully, they can begin to start setting and working toward goals — both as a team and individually.

- **The Relationship May Be Rocky**

Close relationships almost always hit a snag or a crisis. Miscommunication, hurt feelings, deliberate manipulation, feelings of broken trust or being overwhelmed — any of these things can occur. What is important is that the mentor remains calm, patient and mature; assures the young person of the mentor's dedication to her and unconditional love for her; and that the mentor takes the initiative to regroup, forgive and work through any issues in their relationship.

- **Closeness**

When a relationship makes it successfully through a rocky period, the mentor and teen mom often experience much greater trust and closeness. This is an exciting mile marker in their relationship, since many teen moms' personal relationships have ended because of similar rocky periods. This is a time to celebrate the relationship, and a great time to start helping the teen mom to set and reach personal goals (big or small).

- **Rely on Staff Support**

If a rough period continues or if a mentor feels that the pair has not reached the second stage, she shouldn't hesitate to seek support from the coordinator.

### Stage 3: Closure

At some point all relationships will come to an end, and it is critical that this closure stage not be overlooked. Many teen moms have had adults come and go in their lives and are very rarely provided the opportunity to say a proper goodbye. The closing stage is a time for celebration and reflection upon progress, struggles and successes.

- **Identify Natural Emotions, Such as Grief, Denial and Resentment**

In order to help teen moms express emotions about the relationship ending, mentors should model appropriate behavior. The mentor should express her feelings and emotions about the end of the relationship and then let the teen mom do the same.

- **Provide Opportunities to Say Goodbye in a Respectful and Affirming Way**

Mentors shouldn't wait for the very last meeting with teen moms to say goodbye. The mentor should slowly bring it up as soon as he or she becomes aware that the relationship will be coming to a close.

- **Address Appropriate Ways to Stay in Touch**

Discuss potential ways to stay in touch — through social media, by taking her to church and more. Is it OK for the teen mom to continue to contact you? If so, how?

(Massachusetts Mentoring Partnership)

### Premature Closure

Sometimes a relationship will end prematurely because of situations out of our control (a mentor moves unexpectedly, the teen mom quits). Below are some keys for handling situations when a relationship ends earlier than intended.

- **Clarify Reasons.** Clarify the reasons that the relationship is ending and take the time to talk with each other and say goodbye to bring closure to the relationship (if possible).
- **Give Positive Reinforcement.** If the mentor is the one who initiates ending the relationship, it is very important that she communicate to the teen mom what she likes about her and what she hopes for her.
- **Plan for the Future.** Plan ahead for future relationships. Think through any boundaries or guidelines that may be needed to make future relationships healthier.
- **Answer Questions Simply.** Keep assumptions and rumors to a minimum by answering questions about your relationship in the group, if needed. Keep answers simple and positive.

(Karcher, 2014)

# Conclusion

## Quick Reference Chart

A Mentor Is ...	A Mentor Is Not ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A friend.</li><li>• A coach.</li><li>• Nurturing.</li><li>• Encouraging.</li><li>• Dependable.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A parent.</li><li>• A professional counselor.</li><li>• A social worker.</li><li>• The bank.</li><li>• Naïve.</li></ul>
A Mentor Should ...	A Mentor Should Not ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serve as a leader for the whole group, not just one teen mom.</li><li>• Take good care of herself and her family.</li><li>• Ask open-ended questions.</li><li>• Help teen moms to identify their strengths.</li><li>• Encourage teen moms to dream.</li><li>• Help teen moms to develop problem-solving skills.</li><li>• Teach teen moms to recognize the true Savior.</li><li>• Show compassion and forgiveness.</li><li>• Listen a lot.</li><li>• Offer to pray for and with teen moms.</li><li>• Communicate often.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think that teen moms “need” her.</li><li>• Set goals for teen moms.</li><li>• Take teen moms’ attitudes or behaviors personally.</li><li>• Try harder than teen moms to solve their problems.</li><li>• Expect that teen moms’ lives will be changed overnight.</li><li>• Give unasked-for advice.</li><li>• Make promises you can’t keep.</li><li>• React to teen moms out of anger or impatience.</li><li>• View teen moms as helpless or weak.</li><li>• Focus on past abuse, trauma, or problems.</li><li>• Attempt to rescue or “fix” teen moms.</li></ul>



# Benefits of Serving Teen Moms

There are some beautiful things that you can look forward to in healthy relationships with teen moms:

- You will grow in your relationship with God as you learn to listen to and trust His leading.
- You get to put your faith into action!
- You will see the world from a new perspective.
- You will gain wisdom in ministering cross-culturally and/or cross-generationally.
- You will make new friends.
- You get to hang out with precious babies.
- You get to model the love of Christ in a very personal way.
- You may get to help a girl turn her life over to Christ and then disciple her.
- You and your family/friends get to participate in ministry together.
- You plant seeds of hope that will produce a harvest!
- You get to serve side by side with other women who have a similar passion for teen moms.



# Amber's Story

## Amber, Courtney's Mom:

If I were to describe my childhood, I would say, "I survived." I remember after every horrific incident of abuse, just picking myself up and moving forward. My life changed the day I got pregnant. It was my first glimpse of God. I realized He was giving me a precious gift: a baby girl. I decided at that moment I would no longer be a victim, and neither would she. I didn't know anyone, but I decided to go to *YoungLives* camp. After all, going away for a week had to be better than dealing with my life at home. My daughter was only 2 months old and cried the entire first night. I remember a woman asking if she could take her so I could sleep. I nearly cried — confused about why someone would want to help me. My entire life had taught me not to trust anyone. The woman could see the fear in my face and promised to stay right outside my room. I realized, then, what this *YoungLives* thing was all about: women who want to love teen moms who are broken. Today, my life is great. I am engaged to a wonderful man. My daughter, Courtney, is a sophomore in all honors classes. She wants to go to Duke University and become an anesthesiologist. After I obtained my associates degree and several accounting certificates, I decided to go back to get my bachelor's degree; I now have just one semester left. *YoungLives* showed me there is a God who loves me, a God I can trust. It changed my life. I now serve as a mentor in *YoungLives* because I know it can make a difference, one teen mom at a time.



## Courtney, Amber's Daughter:

My mom had me at 16. I just turned 16. I cannot imagine having a baby right now. My mom had to sacrifice a lot for me and continues to do so every day. There have been times when our lives were not perfect, but I have an abundance of respect for her: for changing her life, for graduating from high school and college and for setting an example to me. It was visible to me, even as a child, that my mom was different after she allowed God into her life. Making that decision was a battle for her because she did not know how to trust anyone, but *YoungLives* showed her how. I have gone to *YoungLives* camp to serve as a childcare volunteer because I know it is where my life was changed. I want to give other teen moms the same opportunity. Without *YoungLives*, I don't know where my life would be, but I don't think I would know God or be living out the dreams He has for me.

## Conclusion

As mentors, we may experience many highs and lows, our progress may look different than we expect, and we may not see the rapid turnaround we hope for. But the Father to the fatherless, Hope of the Nations and Great Healer is the One who has called us to this — and He loves teen moms more than we ever will. This is His work, His heart and His battle. Let's surrender to Him, ready and willing to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the life of a teen mom and her child!

**“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” — Galatians 6:9**

To learn more about teen moms, leading, cross-cultural ministry, urban ministry and more, download the *YoungLives* Recommended Resources list from the Staff Resources site.



You were made for this.®

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## YoungLives Mentor Covenant

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*"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you,  
not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well,  
because you had become so dear to us."  
– 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

### **As a mentor in the ministry of YoungLives, I commit to the following:**

- \_\_\_ 1. I will pursue friendship with teen mom(s) on a weekly basis and will seek to develop deep and intentional mentoring relationships with one or more teen moms.
- \_\_\_ 2. I will help plan and participate in club and help provide transportation for teen moms as needed.
- \_\_\_ 3. I will attend monthly mentor meetings.
- \_\_\_ 4. I will attend any required training, including the regional Young Life leadership day or weekend.
- \_\_\_ 6. I will promote and make every effort to attend YoungLives' summer camp.
- \_\_\_ 7. I will help plan and participate in Campaigners.
- \_\_\_ 8. In the event that I need to miss a regular event, I will contact the YoungLives coordinator.
- \_\_\_ 9. I commit to the YoungLives ministry for a minimum of one year.

At the end of one year, the coordinator and I will discuss my experience in YoungLives and decide whether/how my role should change. I understand how vital my commitment is to the teen moms I will meet and to the ministry of YoungLives. I commit to talking with the YoungLives coordinator about any issues that I cannot resolve, and working to reconcile them peacefully. I understand that I am being called to love teen moms unconditionally and that this will not always be an easy task. I believe that Christ is calling me into this role, and I will continue to grow my relationship with Him, relying on His strength to enable me to minister to teen moms.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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