

**Social Hangouts for Teens**  
***Maximizing opportunity and addressing potential challenges***

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**Training Topics:**

- 1) Hidden rules and expectations in a teen hangout
- 2) Helping teens choose successful activities
- 3) Family-based strategies for risk and vulnerability inherent in adolescent social learning

**Groundwork:**

1) *Fostering Parent Community*

- Finding parents of teens with shared interests
- Opening lines of communication about facilitating hangouts between teens
- Supporting one another in tolerating the stress of adolescent social worlds

2) *Self-Questions for Teens*

- What activities do I like doing on my own?
- What activities do I like or would I consider doing in a group?
- What are some new groups or activities that I could start myself?
- Are there regular groups happening that I already know about and would want to join?

**Hidden Rules and Expectations:**

1) *When Visiting Others*

- Talking to peers' parents
- Negotiating activities with peers
- How to self-advocate during a hangout (asking for the bathroom etc)
- What resources are typically available versus off limits to guests and how to ask if confused
- How to take a break
- How to end the hangout

2) *When Hosting Others*

- What it means to have a guest and make someone feel welcome
- Determining what materials would be available for the guest and considering putting away those materials that teens would want to have off limits
- Handling requests from guests (bathroom/snack, etc)
- Negotiating what activities to do and in what order
- How to take a break if needed
- How to end the hangout if needed

2) *When In The Community*

- Meeting up
- How school/house rules and community rules are the same/different

- Inviting versus being invited; who chooses the activity
- How to take a break if needed
- How to end the hangout if needed
- Expectations about staying in communication with parents

### **Effective Activities:**

- Interest-driven
- Can be done in a parallel or interactive way, or somewhere in between
- Familiar to the teen
- Not too over-stimulating
- Does not hinge on reciprocal conversation

### **Activity Ideas:**

- Gaming
- Museums or shops centered on a particular interest
- Movies
- Physical activities or sports teens are already comfortable with
- Screen time

### **If Your Teen Wants To Create Their Own Group:**

- Determine with your child what they are most interested in
- Consider what networks are available for your child to introduce a new group to others with similar interests (school, neighborhood, etc)
- Consider social media or online notice boards to announce the group
- Discuss with school teams how learning these skills of group creation/promotion could potentially be a part of your child's school life and could foster a true sense of belonging and community involvement

### **Coping With Social Fear/Vulnerability:**

- It is important to identify and address parental fears, concerns, and expectations around social success and belonging for teens
- It is important to remember that adolescence is a typically socially difficult time for almost everyone. The tendency can be to protect teens from social difficulty, and certainly teens need to be protected from bullying and other forms of social violence. Social rejection and difficulty, however, is a painful but necessary part of adolescent development so that teens can learn who they really are, what they really need, and how to find others who will like them for who they are.
- It is important to remind teens that even if they experience a social rejection or slight they are still worthy of caring and belonging. It is also important to remind teens what a universal experience this is in adolescence.

### **Managing Expectations:**

- Enriching social lives take many forms
- Teens may not feel a strong drive for hangouts
- Teens on the spectrum may do better with either younger or older individuals compared with their direct peers
- Teens on the spectrum may get along better with adults than with peers