

# Therapists and Social Workers: Lessons You Can Use With Teens

## Good Father Scavenger Hunt

Several stories in this issue have descriptions of good things that fathers do. Ask teens to read the stories and circle everything that a father does that they think is good fathering—something they hope to do when they are fathers. Here are a few tips:

**Father Lessons**, by Otis Hampton, pp. 4-6. In the sections titled “Lesson Two” and “Lesson Three,” Otis lists about 10 things that his father did that helped him grow.

Also, ask students how long Otis lived with his (adopted) father. Attentive readers will notice that he moved in with them in 1996, and his father died in 1998. In just two years, Otis’s father gave Otis a lifetime of good attention and advice. For young men who worry that their time with their children may be limited, Otis shows that it’s not the amount of time, but what you do with it.

**Stepping Into Fatherhood**, by Michael Orr, pp. 20-21. Michael isn’t as specific as Otis about the things he’s doing as a father, but there are still several things to circle. You may want to point out that Michael reads to prepare himself for fatherhood, goes with Erica to childbirth classes, seeks advice from his father, goes to couples therapy to talk out issues with Erica, works full-time to help support the family, and makes spending time with his child a priority in his non-work hours. (He’s not hanging out with the fellas, which he’d surely like to do after a long day.)

**Back in Touch**, by Eric Benson, pp. 30-31. Eric hasn’t seen his son Kharon in 14 years. He was 4 months old when Eric was sent to prison. When Kharon decides to reconnect, Eric wants to make the most of it. Ask teens to circle the things Eric does. You may want to note that he works to change his life, and he asks Kharon to write down his questions (since their visiting time is limited). He takes parenting classes to better understand what Kharon is going through.

Write to us at:  
**Represent**

224 West 29th St— 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
or fax us at: (212)-279-8856 or email us  
at [Representmail@youthcomm.org](mailto:Representmail@youthcomm.org)



## Bad Father Scavenger Hunt

Depending on your group, you may want to help the teens identify qualities of a bad father, too. The goal of this conversation is not to bash fathers. Rather, it’s to help teens see that the betrayals and/or abandonment by their fathers were not their fault. And to help them recognize things to avoid doing when they become fathers.

**Absent Father: Denied a Dad**, by James Bodrick, pp. 7-9. James’s mother lies to him about who his father is. Ask the students if they feel that children have a right to know who their father is, and to have contact with him—no matter what his circumstances.

**Abusive Father: Betrayed by My Father**, by Virgen Nuñez, pp. 10-13. Ask students to identify the two or three worst things that happen in this story. Note that they include the father’s initial betrayal and abuse. Then, to make things worse, her mother denies it and claims the father is under the spell of witchcraft. Ask the teens which was worse, the initial abuse, or the mother’s refusal to believe Virgen. (There’s no correct answer; the idea is to help students see that both acts were terrible betrayals.)

**Abusive Father/Abusive Child?: Not Repeating History**, by Teyu Shu, p. 14.

Everyone who has been abused worries that they will repeat the abuse with their own children. Before reading the story, ask the teens if they have those fears. If possible, ask them to be specific, e.g., do they have an explosive temper like one of their parents? Then read Teyu’s story. Are they hopeful that she can learn to break the chain of abuse? What advice would they give her?

## Reality Check

**Giving Better Than You Got**, p. 22. Therapist John Carr notes that some kids tend to idealize an abusive or absent parent. Before reading, ask the teens what can happen when anger toward another person builds up inside of you over time (self-injury, fighting, etc.). Then, read paragraphs 3-5 of the piece. Ask the teens what could be some consequences of not coming to terms with difficult feelings toward an abusive or absent parent. Then, have them talk or write about their safe place (therapy, writing, other creative endeavors) for releasing their anger and sadness toward loved ones who have let them down. Also see the last two paragraphs of Griffin Kinard’s issue introduction, p. 4.