



SESSION # 5- OPTIONAL ADOLESCENTS AND FAMILY- MAINTAINING A BALANCE

Orientation	Pre-Arrival
Session Overview	<p>This optional session uses the analogy of a mobile to discuss the family as a unit with the need to find a new balance with the arrival of a new family member.</p> <p>Note the following lesson icons throughout the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - this indicates a take away point that should not be missed during the lesson • - this indicates a question or idea that can be used to facilitate a conversation
Session Objectives	<p>By the end of this session, host families will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think deeply about the culture in their home and develop plans to prepare for their student. 2. Identify challenges faced by adolescents and families in cross-cultural settings 3. Apply tips and best practices from other host families
Participants	<input type="checkbox"/> Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Host Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Host Siblings
Format	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Active / Interactive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Some Activity / Interactivity <input type="checkbox"/> Independent
Duration	20 minutes
Group Size	Any size
Minimum Staffing	1 facilitator
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart or whiteboard • Activity # 2 – copies of handout - <u>How Do You Do Things In Your Home?</u>
Preparation	<p>Read lesson to understand concept</p> <p>Create flipchart</p>

Handouts for participants

[How Do You Do Things in Your Home](#)
[Talking With Your Teen](#)

INTRODUCTION & THE MOBILE METAPHOR (5 MINUTES)

Facilitator Note: Have a simple mobile or a picture of one as a visual aid.

1. Share Virginia Satir's <http://renaissanceranch.net/virginia-satir/> analogy of relationships in a family:

Family relationships are similar to a mobile - a system that is carefully balanced, "...if the wires on one of the pieces of the mobile are twisted, the mobile would spin improperly. Instead of a delicately balanced mobile, each piece would get entangled and out of balance at the slightest breeze. A well-balance mobile, or family system, could sway and flex with the strong gusts and heavy winds of life."



2. Ask families how the quote relates to a family's preparations for an exchange student.

✓ With the arrival of the student, the family will need to adjust to rebalance the mobile. The student also must adjust; everyone is responsible to keep the mobile (or family) in balance.

3. Use these any of these **conversation starters** to help the participants begin to consider their own family's adjustment. Choose two to three questions to help families begin to think about the topic.

- What do you need to take into consideration as your family prepares for a new family member?
- What kinds of adjustments do you foresee your family making as you welcome a new member?
- What special or unique dynamics occur within your family that may surprise your exchange student?
- How might culture and the iceberg analogy influence the kinds of adjustments your family will need to make?
- What are some of the roles, responsibilities, relationships and rules that are now in balance that may have to be reconsidered in order to accommodate a new family member?
- Why are negotiation and compromise from both the student and host family important tools to be used throughout the exchange?
- What kinds of concrete routines and ways of life in your home will need to be adjusted as you welcome a new teenager?
- How might the morning bathroom routine become complicated with a new family member?
(Having a new family member may mean that someone has to get up earlier than they are

used to or take their shower at night or it may mean that someone begins to dress or dry their hair in the bedroom rather than the bathroom.)

- What if you have a new family member who's talkative while your family tends to keep to themselves? How might you adjust to find balance within this new family unit?
4. Key notes to include in the conversation and draw out from participants:
- ✓ The family will need to adjust to rebalance the mobile. Student also must adjust, too. Everyone is responsible to keep the mobile in balance.
 - ✓ Since no two people in the family are exactly alike, a family doesn't function without attention to the needs and strengths of **all** the members.
 - ✓ Remember the iceberg analogy: consider within your own household, what is above the waterline – (routines and behaviors), and what is below the waterline –(unspoken rules or family values). These unspoken rules and family values need to be communicated and explained.
 - ✓ Adjusting to a new teenager in the house can be difficult, especially if you are not often around teenagers. But with careful preparation, understanding, and flexibility, families are able to adjust and your student will feel welcomed!
 - ✓ If families are aware of the need to rebalance certain parts, it can be exciting to add someone new to the system. All family members can share in learning about themselves and others as a result of balancing.
 - ✓ The more you think in advance about how your family operates and talk with your family about adjusting, the more prepared you will be for your student's arrival.
 - ✓ Include your exchange student in these conversations once he or she arrives in order to introduce them to your family's unique "culture".

ACTIVITY # 1 - YOUR FAMILY'S CULTURE & ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR (10 MINUTES)

1. Pass out the handout [How Do You Do Things In Your Home?](#) Let families know that this handout is a great tool when having a conversation with your family before the student arrives. This should also be used with your student once he or she arrives.

2. After looking at the handout with the families, ask families to form small groups of 6 or less individuals. Instruct them to have a discussion about how families can talk with their student about how things are done in their homes and expectations of the student. Write these **conversation starters** on the flipchart for groups to discuss. Allow families to work together for 7 minutes.

- What are the priority topics that your student will need to understand about your family & home?
- What challenges can you expect as you teach your student about your family's culture?

- What are the best approaches for sharing your family’s culture with your student?
- How will you address situations where the student is not picking up on how your household functions?

DEBRIEF AND WRAP UP (5 MINUTES)

Bring the group back together and ask groups to share some of their ideas. Pass out [Talking With Your Teen](#) as an additional resource. During the conversation, weave in these key points if families don’t come up with these ideas:

- ✓ With your student, have a conversation about family culture, ways of doing things, and expectations early to avoid miscommunication later on.
- ✓ When talking about family culture, ways of doing things, and expectations with the student, try to keep the conversation lighthearted. This is the time to help the student adjust to your household dynamic and your family culture, which is completely new to them.
- ✓ Encourage the student to share common practices in their country with you to give your family a better understanding of family life in their home country.
- ✓ Be aware that weak language and exhaustion will make learning new routines and rules harder.
- ✓ Students may need to be reminded several times during the first few weeks or months before they actually “get it”.
- ✓ Many parents feel the need to treat the student as a guest and are wary of parenting the student as their own child. YFU recommends that host parents treat the exchange student as their own child.
- ✓ Adding the student’s routines and culture to your family will illustrate that just as your “way” is ingrained in you, so too is your student’s culture ingrained in him...he needs time to adjust.
- ✓ Laugh “with” your student at mistakes and make it an opportune moment to correct behavior
- ✓ Each family has developed certain systems by which they balance one another and are able to function.
- ✓ Each system takes into account all of the family members and their needs. With another member added to the system, some rebalancing will be necessary.
- ✓ Remember that these students are from another culture in addition to being teenagers, thus this experience will bring its challenges, such as technology and typical teenage behaviors.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Lead a discussion to talk in detail about adolescent behavior and do a comparison activity. Use these **conversation starters** or develop your own:

- What were YOU like as an adolescent? If your parents were to describe you at age 16, what would they say? **Record these words on the left side of the prepared Adolescent Behavior flipchart.**
- When was the first time you left home for an extended period of time? How did you feel? How important was communication with your friends – probably by telephone or passing notes in class?
- From your experience as an adult, when you think of adolescents today, what words or descriptive phrases come to mind? **Record these words on the right side of flipchart.**

2. Compare and contrast the words written on the flipchart. *(The objective is for families to realize that not much has changed in a teenager's world from the time host parents were teenagers to today's teens!)*

3. Debrief the activity using these **conversation starters** or develop your own:

- What are you looking forward to with the arrival of your exchange student?
- What kinds of expectations do you have? Are these reality based?
- What about our generational cultural lenses? (Ex: Communication: Communication is important no matter how old you are, only the methods of communication have changed. Encourage families to strike a balance
- How do our cultural lenses affect the way we interpret our exchange students' (and other teenagers') behavior? (Ex: Leaving home: As we just discussed, leaving home is challenging no matter what generation you are in...this is something to keep in mind as we welcome these students.)