

Clearly, youth pastors are often the first refuge kids seek when they're looking for a little shelter from the chaotic, damaging stuff of their lives. And that's why I love the five counseling "imperatives" Jeanne Mayo, GROUP columnist and ministry icon, champions:

- **Remember that listening is usually more healing than talking.** Our obsession with fixing others' problems actually pushes them away.
- **Teach yourself to make "say-it-back statements."** By responding with phrases such as "That must have really hurt," teenagers will sense that you're making an emotional connection with them.
- **Never cheapen a problem by saying, "I know just how you feel."** The sheer act of deep listening is what helps most.
- **At all costs, avoid "T.R.T."** That stands for "typical religious talk"—jargon such as "all things work together for good." Sure it's true, but it sounds trite when someone is in the thick of battle.
- **Know when to call in the pros.** Here's how Jeanne handles it:  
"I want to be your friend and help you through this, but can I connect you with someone who can be even more help to you?"