

HANGING IN THERE IN YOUTH MINISTRY

1. **TEAM IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO.** When you try to do it all yourself it not only doesn't work, but it shortchanges kids. Build a team of adult and student leaders, then release them for ministry and trust them to do their part. Relationship-building with volunteer youth workers is crucial. They are the front-line troops who teach and influence the teens on a weekly basis. So send them birthday cards, get together for fellowships and parties, visit them when they're sick or hurting, greet them personally at church, and send them tips on how to be a better leader.
2. **MAKE ORGANIZATION MORE OF A PRIORITY.** A file drawer of prepared forms makes the administration side of your job so much easier, and that frees you to do what you love best-spending time with teenagers.
3. **Question- ASKING DOESN'T MAKE YOU LAME; IT MAKES YOU REAL.** When you confess your obvious ignorance you're giving your kids the privilege of explaining their world to you. So ask questions about words you don't understand, fashion trends that come out of nowhere, music that seems repellent, and movies or TV shows that are outside your entertainment zone. It's okay to ask questions. Target your questions about *why* something is important, rather than details about *what* it is. Your goal is to get a peek at how your kids are thinking and believing.
4. **YOU NEED REJUVENATING CONNECTIONS WITH ADULTS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.** Get involved in a community organization. Look for ones that are outside the Christian subculture. Community groups often welcome volunteers and you'll get the chance to have fascinating conversations with people outside your normal orbit, develop like-minded relationships that don't have your church at the hub, and create opportunities to live out your deepest calling as you impact non-Christian adults.
5. **FIND A YOUNGER YOUTH MINISTER OR INTERN TO MENTOR.** When you pour your knowledge, skills, experiences, and passion for youth ministry into another, you're living biblically. Like the parable of the talents (Matthew 25: 14-30), if you bury your treasure, you'll lose it all in the end. Give away what's precious to others, and you'll be given even more to give away. Also, it's vital that younger and older work together: Youth is the voice of passion, risk, and relativity. Age is the voice of caution, wisdom, and experience. When the two intersect, you've got something really powerful.
6. **TRAIN, EQUIP. AND RESPECT PARENTS TO BE THEIR KIDS' PRIMARY SPIRITUAL INFLUENCERS.** No youth leader, no matter how talented, is central to effective youth ministry. Parents are more than food or transportation providers- they ultimately make the greatest impact on their teenagers, bar none. So help them grow as parents and Christian guides for their young people. Plan creative, non threatening events that help parents pass on their faith to their kids. The more you do it, the more comfortable they'll feel in their faith-nurturing role.
7. **EXERCISE AND EAT RIGHT!** Take care of your body and your diet. Age & children will sap your energy.
8. **STRETCH YOURSELF.** Your body isn't the only thing that needs exercise--your mind is desperate for it. The person you'll be in five years is in direct relationship to the books you read and the people you spend time with." Read books not related to youth ministry- good fiction, biographies, and autobiographies. Be on the lookout for new challenges and new skills to learn. Seek out those who think differently from you and seek to understand their point of view (especially in the areas of skills, planning models, and organizing).
9. **REDISCOVER NON CHURCH LOVES AND HOBBIES.** Re-explore & find new ways to reconnect to your own youth
10. **REINVENT YOURSELF EVERY THREE YEARS OR SO.** In terms of what you're doing and why you're doing it, you need a fresh start about every three years. Surround yourself with people who are on top of things that are relevant; who are flexible in method but know what they stand for. You'll avoid Well-Worn Rut Disease. Adjust to new ideas, laugh at your own mistakes, and don't take yourself too seriously (but take the message seriously). Exercise your sense of humor every day-it's the lubricant of life.
11. **KEEP YOUR PASTOR CONSTANTLY INFORMED.** You don't want a teenager's parent going to your pastor with an issue that forces him to respond, "I didn't know about that." Consistent communication will build a trusting relationship, and help with your job security.
12. **YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY DOESN'T OPERATE IN ISOLATION.** Respect and encourage what others are doing in their ministry. Sometimes it's worth it in the long run to sacrifice aspects of your agenda for the good of the church. Whether or not you know it (or like it) your ministry is intricately connected with all the other ministries in the church.
13. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR FAMILY.** Balance church responsibilities with family commitments & priorities. If you give all to the work side of your life, you'll have nothing left for the most important people in your life.