

32. TOP-10 LIST FOR CONTACTING STUDENTS

As long as we're on the subject of contacting (that's youth ministry lingo for spending time with students on their turf), here's a top-10 list for how to do it.

- **Number 10:** Learn names. No word sounds better to a teenager than his or her name.
- **Number 9:** Don't try to be one of the gang (sorry, you're not that cool). Teenagers don't need, or want, a balding buddy. They need and want an adult who cares enough to listen to them, talk with them, and model how to be a grown-up Christian.
- **Number 8:** NEVER make fun of them. Teenage humor can be ruthless, especially when it comes to pointing out their friends' flaws. Do NOT join in. You may think teasing breaks the ice, but you're only breaking their future trust in you.
- **Number 7:** Get to know other students through the relationships you already have. I've met hundreds of students by hanging out with teenagers I already know. This is the easiest and most natural way to expand your relationship network.
- **Number 6:** Pray for students you contact, as well as students you'd like to contact. Since it's God who transforms, go ahead and ask God to use your contacting efforts as a means of doing his work.
- **Number 5:** Ask questions. Questions show genuine interest.
- **Number 4:** Don't go too deep too quickly. If you're in the beginning stages of connecting with a student, don't ask

deeply personal questions; they'll come up naturally once a relationship is established. In the beginning, keep things light. Ask questions about school, activities, and friends.

- **Number 3:** Don't try too hard. I've seen adult leaders force their way into conversations with students. That's not building bridges; that's building barriers.
- **Number 2:** Don't talk too much about yourself, even if you were the starting quarterback of the state champion football team back in 1975. Sorry, but who cares? Not teenagers.
- **Number 1:** Be you! God made a youth worker just like you to connect with certain students in your group.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Wondering why contacting is in a community-building chapter? How does contacting build community in youth ministry?

Remember that two of the key components Jesus modeled for building an environment of community were intentional relationships and love. Contacting powerfully demonstrates both.

