

CONNECTING LEARNING ACTIVITY

#9: MAKING COMMITMENTS

Purpose: To increase participants' knowledge about what is required in making a commitment, particularly as it relates to committed relationships.

Materials: Handout "How to Commit."

Time: 30-45 minutes

Planning Note:

This activity would be a nice follow-up to Teachable Moment #7 (What About Marriage?) and the activity "Considering Marriage."

If your group is large, consider having participants work in small groups to answer the questions in Step 4 of the procedure.

Procedures:

1. Tell participants you want to talk specifically about commitment. Ask them, "What does it mean to make a commitment to something or to someone?" Call on a few volunteers to get responses. Supplement their ideas with the following definition:

The act of binding yourself (in heart, body and mind) to a course of action; to commit to something is to pledge or enter into a contract (with yourself or with someone else) to behave in particular ways or to take particular actions. A commitment can be short term or long term.

2. Ask the following questions:

- What kinds of things do young adults/young parents/teenagers sometimes make a commitment to? (A sports team, a hobby, a job, paying a debt, keeping a promise to a parent, etc.)
- Let us think about a young person who makes a commitment to a particular sport. What are some of the ways that he or she could demonstrate that commitment? (For example, consider how Venus and Serena Williams made a commitment to tennis or Tiger Woods made a commitment to golf.)
- Who has made any kind of commitment (other than to a romantic partner) that you are willing to discuss with us?

3. Summarize themes from the discussion. Distribute the handout, and review the following:
 - You make a conscious decision when you commit to something for either a designated period of time or perhaps for a lifetime;
 - It involves making something (or someone) a top priority;
 - You must make personal sacrifices;
 - You have to monitor outside interferences;
 - You must keep your commitment in mind on a daily basis as you make day-to-day decisions;
 - You must have courage and patience because there will always be ups and downs—times when you are happy about the commitment and times when you wish you could walk away—but you hang in there until you have lived out your commitment.

4. Now have participants think about romantic partners and children. Ask:
 - If two people are going out, and they decide to become committed, how does their relationship change? What will they do differently to honor that commitment? What kinds of things should be in place before making a commitment in a romantic relationship? (Answers might include mutual trust, shared goals and dreams, open communication, and the ability to resolve conflicts nonviolently.)
 - If two people who have been committed to each other for a while decide to marry, how do you think their relationship changes? What will they do differently?
 - If two people become parents, how do they demonstrate their commitment to raise their child? Suppose the two people cannot make their relationship work. How should that affect the way they demonstrate their commitment to raise their child?

5. End the discussion with the following:
 - What is the most important thing you realized today about commitment?
 - What are some things you are going to make sure you do the next time you make a commitment to something or someone? Or, what are you going to start to do to honor a current commitment you have?

HOW TO COMMIT

Make a conscious decision. Be clear about what you are committing to and for how long. Commitment is a decision, not a feeling.

- Make what or whom you are committing to a top priority.
- Be ready to make personal sacrifices.
- Monitor outside interferences.
- Consider your commitment as you make day-to-day decisions.

Know that there will always be ups and downs. Celebrate the good times, and hang in there during the bad times. Reach down deep to find courage and patience.