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Attending Teen Club When Your Teen (Tween) is Reluctant

Some parents have been saying that they feel Pact's teen club would be good for their teen or tween but they can't convince their child to attend.

Don't wait until your child is in the throes of teenage recalcitrance – have them begin attending when they are still young enough to accept your decisions. Help them become part of the group before they are angry or non-communicative. Then as issues come up they will already have established relationships of trust and Pact teen club may be a place where they feel safe enough to explore their issues and seek help and support.

If you believe that this is important to their long-term social/mental health then you may have to make attendance be a parent decision rather than a child decision. Research shows that adopted children are over-represented in therapeutic and clinical settings. This speaks to the major challenges faced by teens that are struggling with normal the teen identity questions that are complicated by adoption. For our teens, these issues are made even more complex by the addition of race. Particularly for children who may feel like they're facing these issues alone, this teen club may be one of the few places that allows them to be with other kids who share their experience of adoption. These connections may help them (and you!!) find a safe refuge in a few years if they are struggling to find themselves and don't know where to turn. Don't wait for your child to recognize what they need. Consider a proactive approach that says; "I think this kind of connection is important and I think you need to attend at least 1, 2 or 3 meetings before you decide. After that I will let you choose. But right now, I, as parent, am choosing."

Make attendance a priority and follow through with your commitment. If this is something you believe will be good for them, put it on the calendar ahead of time and tell them that it is a priority committment. As other things come up — and they will because our children and families are all busy with activities and friends — stay strong and make teen club something that you do no matter what. We only have 5 or 6 meetings a year, so you can't wait for the perfect weekend, or your child will be two years older before you get there!

We have had remarkable success with teens who attend wanting to return. You are not alone in having a child who begins assuming they don't want to come. Almost every single tween and teen has started there and almost all of them have found connections that are meaningful to them, once they come.

My oldest, who came very reluctantly, ended up wanting to stay the whole day and thank you thank you to the counselor who allowed my younger daughter to join her sister in the tween group. That went a long way towards making them both feel more comfortable.

My son enjoyed the time spent there, which is a big accomplishment. He liked the free "basketball" time especially.

They didn't say too much (they never do!), but my impression was that the tween group was physically active and that our son came home with a lot of information shared by other kids (he has no contact with his biological family).

It means a lot to R to be around kids in her situation. Also, she now has a boy friend we approve (LONG DISTANCE relationship - the best kind) R is looking forward to Pact camp.

For Christmas our family got together and bought season tickets for the Warriors. We've been taking turns going with G. There is a game this Saturday. We gave G the choice. He had to think awhile, but chose the Tween/Teen event. That's a big thing, since socialization is so needed and so challenging for him. And, he LOVES basketball.

A said the best thing about it for him is the friends and the dinner. He seems to be a little more comfortable with other teens of color. He seemed excited to have made connections with a few who live in our area.

From the standpoint of the kids it went well, based on moods in the car on the way back. My guess is that they look for surprises, rather than predictable programs. There is no doubt that this is a social event. I don't know what they did, except vaguely.

Well, after last Saturday's meeting, W said to me "That teen club is kind of cool. I just wish I knew more people. Next time let's take ..." and then we named about three other kids we could bring with us who are also adopted who might enjoy the activities. W is still finding it hard to make friends with the kids there who are so comfortable with each other.

I thought it was great that several tweens who knew each other came with their parents who have been a mutual support to each other for years. This seems like an ideal way to join in. I think that the Pact camp experience provided the extended time for some kids to make a connection with one another.