

PowerTalk for Families

Our Family Story

Connection is important for all humans; it gives us an essential sense of belonging. As adolescents mature and become more independent, it may seem like they really don't need (or want) connection to family. However, research shows that adolescents with close ties to family and community are more likely to have a sense of security that prevents them from being vulnerable to risky or unhealthy behaviors.

Each family's history helps to create their story and connects them to the world. Understanding that history helps adolescents as they begin to formulate who they are and how they fit into the world.

Our Family Story

Hundreds of different traits connect us as a family. What country did our ancestors come from? Why do I have brown (or blue or green) eyes? Sometimes families are created through adoption, fostering or blending and don't share physical history, but they still have a story that connects them.

Follow these steps to help you create your family's story.

1. Decide how you want to record your family's story. You can create a book, movie, sound recording or some combination of these ideas. The important part is having something that you can refer back to as you remember your family's story.
2. As a family, develop a list of questions you would like to ask to find about your family's history (What country did our family come from? Did they speak another language when they arrived in America? What were some family traditions in previous generations?). Interview members of your extended family who have been alive the longest. Have them help with step 3.
3. Create a family tree. List all of the people that are part of your family and add their birthdates if you can find them. Some of the branches of your tree will clearly connect to the trunk, others might be "grafted" together. All members are important to the story. Be sure to include everyone you know about. See how many generations back your story reaches.
4. What are your family traditions? Do they come from your family's country of origin or the community where you live? Why do you have those traditions?
5. Does your family practice a specific type of religion or belief system? Why? Is it different than previous generations?
6. What's missing from your story? What else would you like to include? Decide as a family what other information should be included in your story.
7. Talk about the next chapter in your family's story. What will that look like? Are there new traditions or rituals that you can begin that you want to be part of your family's story? You are the authors of that story, so you can write the chapters that will come next.

Family is most often the central focus of connection in an adolescent's life, but other times it is connection to other cultural, educational, religious or community groups that can help to increase a young person's sense of belonging to wider world and being safe.