



# Youth Culture Crisis Guide

**BATTLE CRY**  
FOR A GENERATION

[www.battlecry.com](http://www.battlecry.com) 1.800.299.TEEN

## Welcome to the Youth Culture Crisis Guide!

This resource contains vital information to equip parents, youth workers, and concerned adults who care for the younger generation of Americans and who want to make a difference in their lives. It has everything you need to join the frontlines of the BattleCry by defining ten areas of teens' lives that are under attack and giving helpful resources and tips to address each of them.

## Rules or Principles?

**There are two ways to solve problems: make a rule or teach a principle.** When you make a rule, it's easy to enforce and gives your teens safe boundaries. But what happens when you aren't there to make more rules for them? That's when principles come in.

Jesus taught His followers to live by principles, not by rules. An expert of Jewish law once asked Him, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" They all expected the Son of God to identify the one most important rule, but instead he gave them the principle upon which the entire law was based: "**Love the Lord your God...Love your neighbor as yourself.**" (Matthew 22:34-40)

If you teach your teens principles, those principles will guide them even when you aren't around. It's like giving them a map they can use if they get lost, rather than step-by-step directions that are worthless the minute they reach an unexpected curve in the road.

In other words, principles prepare teens for life.

**To teach your teens principles, try having conversations with them rather than just giving directions.** Bring up a topic to find out what their feelings are on it. Then, respond with your own thoughts and continue to ask questions. The goal is to help them realize things for themselves. They'll remember what you talk about much more if they "figure it out" on their own, and they'll be more likely to grasp the principles behind it.

For example, if it is clear they are watching too much TV and need a new rule to keep them under control, start the conversation by asking them about what they like to do the most. Chances are they won't say, "Sit and stare at the TV," but rather things like, hanging out with friends and playing sports.

After you talk about some specific activities, ask, "How much TV do you think you watch every day? Does that leave enough room for everything else you want to do?" That will get them thinking about how much TV they watch and the time they could be spending doing something else. Soon you will have a window to share your own concerns about their viewing habits and start working out a daily viewing limit you can both agree to.

Through conversations like these, you not only set rules in their lives to protect them, you help them see the heart behind the rule. Often, teens need specific guidelines to provide protection, but if you work together to come up with them, they get a chance to learn correct principles and to practice applying them to their lives. This will not only help your teens stick to those guidelines, but live a principle-centered, mature life. It will also help them grasp the principle of Jesus' love, not just "church rules."



Each teen will see or hear over 14,000 sexual references on TV this year.

## 1. TELEVISION

Children and teenagers watch an incredible amount of television. **The average child spends 1,154 hours watching TV and only 900 hours in school per year.** Those simple black boxes in the corner of every home have them transfixed. But you would be shocked to discover just what they are watching.

- A child has seen 200,000 violent acts and 16,000 murders on television by age 18.
- MTV broadcasts an average of 18 physical and 17 verbal references to sex *per hour*.
- The average American teenager will view nearly 14,000 sexual references, innuendoes and jokes per year.
- Studies have found that teens who watch a lot of television with sexual content are twice as likely to engage in intercourse as those who watch fewer such programs.

Help your teens monitor the amount of TV they watch, and even more importantly, *what* they watch.

### Helpful Resources

Focus on the Family

[www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)

Phil Chalmers

[www.truelies.org/forparents.htm](http://www.truelies.org/forparents.htm)

Common Sense Media

[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)

Parent's Television Council

[www.parentstv.org](http://www.parentstv.org)



MTV is one of the top influencers of teen lifestyle.

### Suggested Guidelines

- Consider canceling your cable subscription. Cable TV offers many inappropriate channels, such as MTV. By receiving only the local channels, your teens won't have the temptation to watch as much TV, and are less likely to be exposed to perverse materials. The sacrifice is worth it.

- Pay attention to each show's ratings. Determine ahead of time that programs with certain ratings will not be viewed in your home. (For an explanation of TV ratings, check out The TV Parental Guidelines website at [www.tvguidelines.org/ratings.asp](http://www.tvguidelines.org/ratings.asp))
- Teens have a tendency to sit and "vedge out" in front of the TV for hours and hours. Only allow your teen to watch a certain number of hours of TV per week and encourage them to do something stimulating with their time.
- Choose specific television programs that you will watch regularly, rather than just turning on the TV whenever boredom hits.
- Watch TV with your kids and speak up when there is improper content. Lead by example and turn off the TV when inappropriate sexual scenes are shown.
- Bring your family closer by keeping the TV off during mealtimes and family discussions.

## 2. VIDEO GAMES

In 1984's *Super Mario Brothers*, players jump on bad guys' heads and search for golden coins. In 2004's top selling video game, *Grand Theft Auto*, players slit cops' throats and prowl for prostitutes.

Growing more and more outrageously inappropriate with each new release, video games can be even worse than passive entertainment like TV and movies. **Instead of just observing immorality, players are actively participating in killing, drug dealing, and even sex.** In fact, 48% of video game content involving violence, sexual themes, profanity, substance abuse, and/or gambling, is not even labeled on the game's box. An alarming 14% of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade video gamers are considered "addicted."



(top) Super Mario  
(bottom) Grand Theft Auto

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[www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)

Phil Chalmers

[www.truelies.org/forparents.htm](http://www.truelies.org/forparents.htm)

Common Sense Media

[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)

Grading the Movies

[www.gradingthemovies.com](http://www.gradingthemovies.com)

Game Spot

[www.gamespot.com/misc/top100\\_pop.html](http://www.gamespot.com/misc/top100_pop.html)

Christian Spotlight's Guide to Games

[christiananswers.net/spotlight/games/home.html](http://christiananswers.net/spotlight/games/home.html)

Fun Home Games

[www.funhomegames.com](http://www.funhomegames.com)

## Suggested Guidelines

- Video games have ratings, too. Check out *The Video Game Revolution* ([www.pbs.org/kcts/videogamerevolution/impact/esrb.html](http://www.pbs.org/kcts/videogamerevolution/impact/esrb.html)) and determine which ratings you will allow in your home.
- Try spending an afternoon playing video games with your teen, or at least watch them while they play. If for some reason they object or start to feel uncomfortable with you viewing and/or participating, it may be a sign that they shouldn't be playing it in the first place. Be sure to voice your concerns regarding any inappropriate content.
- Video games have the tendency to consume hours of teenagers' lives. Consider setting a time limit for how long your teens are allowed to play each day.

## 3. Sex/Dating

"I'm 14 and I live in Oregon. First [base] would be like kissing; second base would be like making out; third would be, like oral sex." -Maia

The pressure to have sex and be sexual is very real in a teenager's life. **In fact, 40% of 10th-graders engaged in oral sex in the past year, with a quarter of them reporting three or more partners.** According to one survey, 14% of 13 and 14 year olds say they are sexually active, meaning they have gone beyond kissing. That number jumps to 41% when kids reach 15 and 16.



Teen dating often leads to heartbreak.

Sex isn't the only problem. Dating around often leads to heartbreak, unnecessary drama, and spiritually suffocating distractions. It's important that teens make wise choices while dating because their dating relationships will affect their spiritual life and their future marriage.

### Helpful Resources

*I Kissed Dating Good-Bye & Boy Meets Girl*  
Joshua Harris

*The Bride Wore White: Seven Secrets to Sexual Purity*  
Dannah Gresh

*Every Man's Battle*  
Stephen Arterburn

## **Suggested Guidelines**

- Don't be afraid to ask your teens the hard questions and to openly discuss sex with them. (Take a look at Focus on the Family's *How to Talk to your Teen About Sex* [www.focusonyourchild.com/develop/art1/A0001599.html](http://www.focusonyourchild.com/develop/art1/A0001599.html))
- Teens are eager to grow up too fast. Depending on your teen's maturity level, discuss an appropriate age for them to begin pursuing dating relationships. Many parents choose to set this age at 16.
- Younger girls have a tendency to date older guys and eventually end up joining their peer group. Unless the older guy and his friends are growing Christians, this can be a dangerous situation—parents, beware!
- 2 Corinthians 6:14 commands that Christians not be joined together with unbelievers. With that in mind, do not allow your teen to date a non-Christian.
- Encourage your teens to bring their “significant other” to your house so you can spend time getting to know them (and get an idea of what the relationship is like at the same time).
- Teach your teens to make wise decisions in their relationships with the opposite sex, such as never being alone in a bedroom and never being alone in a house. It would also be beneficial to set a curfew.
- Encourage double dates and hanging out in groups instead of always being one-on-one with their boyfriend/girlfriend. It's more fun that way anyway!
- Encourage your teen to set solid physical boundaries in their relationships.



Friends can either make or break young people's walk with the Lord.

## **4. FRIENDS**

One of the biggest reasons teens fall away from their faith and make wrong choices is because of their friends. Someone once said, “**Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.**” It's crucial to their spiritual walk that your teens' closest friends are growing Christians.

### **Suggested Guidelines**

- Teens often feel like they're the only one following Jesus, but that's never completely true. Help your teen grow in their faith and meet other Christians by getting them involved in a solid church youth group.
- To get to know the people your teen is hanging out with, invite them over to dinner occasionally.
- If your teen is hanging out with the wrong crowd, point out specific ways you've noticed him or her change. This will help them realize that they really are becoming like who they spend time with.
- Many teens simply haven't had an encounter with Jesus yet. Pray for your teens' non-Christian friends and offer for pay for their way to church camp, church conferences, etc.

## 5. MUSIC

Green Day's album *American Idiot* is saturated with angry f- and s- words that slander Christianity, calling religious leaders hypocrites, and scoffing at sin and salvation. One song even describes a suicide ("Jimmy died today/He blew his brains out in the bay").

In The Killer's *Hot Fuss* album, the singer describes a back-seat sexual encounter in a car. In one song, a man apparently murders his ex after being dumped. Another finds a man obsessed with another man.

And these are only two small examples of the lyrics in popular music. Created by God and for God, music today stands for just about anything but Him. If you put garbage in, you get garbage out. **Teens claim that they don't listen to the words, but if you put them to the test, they can still sing along.** Do you really know what your teens are listening to?

### Helpful Resources

Focus on the Family

[www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)

Fresh Releases

[www.freshreleases.com/rock.html](http://www.freshreleases.com/rock.html)

Phil Chalmers

[www.truelies.org/forparents.htm](http://www.truelies.org/forparents.htm)

Common Sense Media

[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)

Grading the Movies

[www.gradingthemovies.com](http://www.gradingthemovies.com)



The *Killer's* press shoot photo, for their new album "Hot Fuss."



Lead Guitarist of *Green Day*, Billie Joe Armstrong.

### Suggested Guidelines

- With all the sex, violence and lies embedded in secular music, it would be a wise decision to not let your teens listen to secular music at all.
- Try playing only Christian music in the car and your house. You'll be surprised at the change in the atmosphere that happens when you turn it on.
- To encourage your teens to listen to Christian music, offer to buy them CDs as long as they are by a Christian artist.
- Teens often argue they just like the beat. You can find similar-sounding Christian artists to replace secular bands. Check out: [www.youthfire.com/music/compare](http://www.youthfire.com/music/compare)
- Grab your teen's favorite CD cover and read the lyrics. What you find may surprise you.

## 6. INTERNET

It happened on accident, the first time anyway. **90% of 8-16 year olds have viewed porn online, most while innocently doing homework.** In fact, the average age of first exposure to Internet porn is 11 years old, which has led to 12-17 year olds becoming its largest consumers. Pornography distorts young minds with unrealistic and temptation-laden imagery and it has ripped apart countless marriages and families.

But pornography isn't the Internet's only danger. 89% of sexual solicitations of youth are made in chat rooms. We must teach our teens be wise on the Internet and be willing to use preventative measures to keep them from danger.

### Helpful Resources

Phil Chalmers

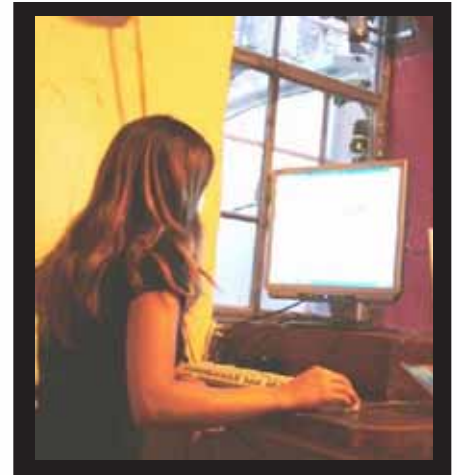
[www.truelies.org/forparents.htm](http://www.truelies.org/forparents.htm)

Common Sense Media

[www.common Sense Media.org](http://www.common Sense Media.org)

Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability

[www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)



90% of 8-16 year olds have viewed porn online.

### Suggested Guidelines

- There are many good Internet filters you can download. Find some of them at [www.parentalguidance.org](http://www.parentalguidance.org).
- As a form of accountability, keep your computer in a "public" room where others can see the monitor at all times.
- Late night surfing is often when temptation strikes. Have a "no Internet" rule after most of the family has gone to bed.
- Make sure your teen knows to never give out any personal information in a chat room. It's best to simply avoid them.

## 7. MOVIES

"Sex sells," and Hollywood monopolizes on it. More and more promiscuity, violence, and profanity are filling our theaters and our homes, all in the name of "entertainment." Does this have an effect on the people who watch it?

Junior high students who watch multiple movies that depict alcohol usage are three times more likely to try drinking than those who don't. And if it works that way for alcohol, what about movies loaded with drugs, vulgarity, and sex? **Recently, movies that have been rated PG-13 would have received nothing less than R in years past, for content like nudity, sexual scenes, language, and drug and alcohol depictions.**

We must help guard what goes into our teens' impressionable minds! "A man reaps what he sows." (Galatians 6:7, NIV)

## Helpful Resources

Focus on the Family  
[www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)

Phil Chalmers  
[www.truelies.org/forparents.htm](http://www.truelies.org/forparents.htm)

Common Sense Media  
[www.common Sense Media.org](http://www.common Sense Media.org)

Grading the Movies  
[www.gradingthemovies.com](http://www.gradingthemovies.com)



What are your teens really watching?

## Suggested Guidelines

- Set standards as to what kind of movies your family will watch. For example, you can decide as a family not to watch R-rated movies or movies with sexual scenes.
- Do you know what kind of movies your teens are watching? Have them approve any movie they watch with you before they see it.
- Before viewing any movie, check out what a Christian movie review has to say about it. Focus on the Family ([www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)) is a great source of reviews.

## 8. DRUGS/ALCOHOL

The pressure to be socially accepted is one of the primary reasons young people indulge in drinking and drugs. **In fact, a recent study shows that 47.1% of high schoolers have abused alcohol, and 23.9% have used marijuana in the past 30 days.** 28.5% say drugs were offered to them on school grounds. Studies have shown that if you start drinking at the age of 15, you have a 28% chance of becoming an alcoholic. This is especially alarming when the average age of a first-time drinker is 13.

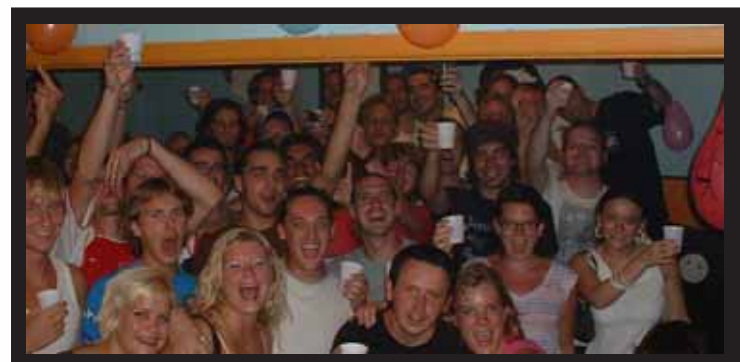


## Helpful Resources

Educating Voices  
[www.educatingvoices.org](http://www.educatingvoices.org)

The Partnership for a Drug Free America  
[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

Group's Youth Ministry  
[www.youthministry.com/links/drugs.asp](http://www.youthministry.com/links/drugs.asp)



## Suggested Guidelines

- When peer pressure hits, it is important that teens have their own personal reasons for not doing drugs or drinking alcohol. Be sure to talk with them about these things and help them internalize the "why nots" of these dangerous substances.

- Teenagers often drink in order to meet a need for identity and acceptance or belonging. These needs must be met in God!
- People become like those they spend the most time around. Keep a close eye on who your teens are hanging out with. Are you okay with them becoming like their friends?

## 9. BUSYNESS

There's school, sports practice, after school jobs, and hours of homework, not to mention the Friday night basketball game. **Teens are constantly on the run, going, going, going.** It's not necessarily bad, but "good" things in their lives will keep them from God's "best." Busyness can be just as much of a distraction from a growing relationship with God as a sinful lifestyle.

Many teens become so heavily involved in school activities that church gets choked out of their lives. If God is their number one priority, everything else will fit in.

### Helpful Resources

Global Expeditions Mission Trips  
[www.globalexpeditions.com](http://www.globalexpeditions.com)

Extreme Camps  
[www.extremecamps.com](http://www.extremecamps.com)

Groups Youth Ministry  
[www.youthministry.com/links/camps.asp](http://www.youthministry.com/links/camps.asp)



Sports often keep students wrapped up in the busyness of life.

### Suggested Guidelines:

- If your teen gets a job, make sure they ask for Sunday mornings and youth group nights off from the very beginning, even in the interview.
- Make church the highest priority in your household so that when your teens are on their own, they will follow your example.
- Teens tend to become so involved in school sports and extracurricular events that they won't have time for spiritual activities. Teach your teens that God comes first.
- Many times teens choose a summer sports camp over church camp. Encourage your teen to make the right decision. You will see that church camps greatly impact their spiritual walk during the following school year.

## 10. CUTTING

Somewhere today, there is a young girl locked in her bedroom, her eyes swollen up with tears, struggling to express the turmoil she really feels deep down inside. If you could see inside her soul, you would be surprised with what you'd find: confusion, torment, loneliness, numbness, hopelessness, hate, anger, and more, unable to express the insurmountable pain she holds within.

The emotional pain is excruciating, and she is desperately seeking an escape, even if just for a minute. She finds relief through the destruction of her own body. It's called "self-injury," but it's better known among teens as "cutting."

"Cutting" is an epidemic that seems to be hitting our teens in record highs and sweeping across our nation (perhaps even across the world) in an intensifying way. It is a phenomenon that many parents, grandparents, and guardians of children do not even know exists because it happens behind closed doors and the scars often go unseen.

Self-injury is the act of inflicting physical pain upon oneself for the purpose of relieving or lessening emotional pain or stress, and it is a serious problem among teenagers today. One expert estimates that 40% of kids have experimented with self-injury.

## Helpful Resources

The Lysamena Project on Self-Injury  
[www.self-injury.org](http://www.self-injury.org)

Self-Injury: You Are NOT the Only One  
[www.palace.net/~llama/psych/injury.html](http://www.palace.net/~llama/psych/injury.html)

Eating Disorders: Mirror Mirror  
[www.mirror-mirror.org/selfinj.htm](http://www.mirror-mirror.org/selfinj.htm)

Women and Self-Injury  
[www.users.zetnet.co.uk/BCSW/leaflets/womens.htm](http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/BCSW/leaflets/womens.htm)

An estimated 40% of teens have experimented with self-injury.



## Suggested Guidelines

- Christ is their only source of help. Encourage your hurting teens to turn to Him rather than cutting. To overcome times of temptation, teens should pray and memorize scripture so they can speak God's Word over their lives.
- It is vital for teens who struggle with cutting to build a network of godly friends with whom they can be honest and who will provide support and accountability during difficult times. Talking to someone in the midst of temptation will often help reduce the distress they may experience during difficult moments. Above all, teens need to know that God is always there for them.
- In order to overcome cutting, a teen must find other ways to deal with life problems such as journaling, painting, music, and physical activity.

Sources for statistics and quotes include:

*A.C. Nielsen Co., AAP Committee, Parent Television Council, RAND, National Institute on Media and the Family, Al Menconi Ministries, MSNBC News, PluggedinOnline.com, Family Safe Media, CNN.com, U.S. Department of Education, USA Network.*