



branch out

Parent Workbook and Syllabus



Summary of Training

Use this summary to keep track of your homework due dates and the meeting dates, times, and location.

Registration

Due Date	
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Meeting 1: Intake *(Meeting: 45 min/Homework: 60 min)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Complete Modules 1 and 2 of Branch Out Online
Due Date	

Meeting 2: Discussion of Modules 1 and 2 *(Meeting: 60 min/Homework: 60 min)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Complete Modules 3 and 4 of Branch Out Online
Due Date	

Meeting 3: Discussion of Modules 3 and 4 *(Meeting: 60 min/Homework: 60 min)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Complete Modules 5 and 6 of Branch Out Online
Due Date	

Meeting 4: Discussion of Modules 5 and 6 *(Meeting: 60 min/Homework: 60 min)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Complete Modules 7 and 8 of Branch Out Online
Due Date	

Meeting 5: Discussion of Modules 7 and 8 *(Meeting: 60 min/Homework: 15 min)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Wrap-Up Branch Out Online
Due Date	

Meeting 6: Wrap-Up and Resource Sharing *(Meeting: 45 min)*

Date	
Time	

Registration

If you have not done so already, complete these steps prior to Meeting 1.

Step 1: Create a Thrive Account

- Visit <https://thrive.psu.edu/>
- Navigate to "For Parents."
- Go to "Register for THRIVE online."
- Click "Sign Up."
- Enter your name, create a username and password, and share your military affiliation (Yes/No).
- An automated email will be sent to you that tells you that you now have an active username and password. Keep that email for your records.

Step 2: Choose Branch Out

- Log In → Navigate to Course Catalog in the upper right-hand corner → Choose Branch Out.
- Click "Start Course" to begin, and review the Branch Out Overview. After you have reviewed the overview video and chosen Branch Out, you can expect to do the following:
 - o Read a welcome statement, and learn the goals of Branch Out.
 - o Decide if you would like to consent to complete assessments throughout the program for research purposes.
 - o Complete introductory assessments if consent was provided.

Meeting 1



Intake 45 minutes
Homework 30 minutes

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Meeting Events

- Test your video or audio (if meeting virtually).
- Introduce yourself and your family members.
- Engage in an icebreaker.
- Create ground rules.
- Register for a Thrive account – <https://thrive.psu.edu/> (if not registered already).
- Complete any required paperwork.

Step 2: Complete Homework [For discussion in Meeting 2]

_____ Complete Module 1: Introduction

_____ Complete Module 2: Communication

_____ Review and download from the Parent Toolkit, if desired, the resources for Session 1

- Positive Conversations Refrigerator Card
- Active Listening

_____ Prepare to discuss the topics addressed in Modules 1 and 2 during the *next meeting* by answering the questions in Step 3: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions. If you have any questions you would like to ask during the discussion, note them in Step 4.

Step 3: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Use the blue boxes on the next few pages to prepare your responses for the *next meeting*. During the *Meeting 2* group discussion, you can use the magenta boxes to record your notes.

As you complete these questions and activities, recognize that changes will not happen overnight. You will need to use the strategies and skills learned throughout Branch Out consistently in your everyday life to see the desired changes in your child's reactions or behaviors. Keep practicing.

When you meet as a group, share and celebrate the small, short-term positive changes you see with your child, and consider what the long-term benefits may be with continued use of the skills and strategies you are learning with Branch Out!



Module 1: Introduction

Module 2: Daily Check-In Discussion Questions



One way to make the adolescent years more enjoyable and less stressful for you and your child is to intentionally create an environment that promotes trust and communication. You can encourage communication by using a daily check-in.

Do you practice daily check-ins with your child? If so, what topics do you discuss? If you have not used daily check-ins, think about how a daily check-in could enhance your communication with your child.



Group discussion notes.



Select a day this week to try out a daily check-in with your child. Use the Daily Agenda template in the module as a guide. You can save the template and refer back to it if needed. You may also use the space below to plan your daily check-in.



Group discussion notes:



Meeting 1



Reflect on the daily check-in. How did your child respond? What are the potential benefits your family might experience by incorporating a daily check-in into your household routine?



Group discussion notes:



Module 2: Create an Environment that Encourages Open Communication Discussion Questions



Module 2 describes additional strategies you can use to create an environment that promotes trust and communication such as planned family activities; rituals; and routines, like family meals, Friday movie nights, and family hikes.

Make a list of activities your family does together. Are there any new or additional activities you would like to start doing together as a family? Put a star next to the activities you would like your family to participate in more.



Group discussion notes:



Module 2: Establishing Boundaries Discussion Questions



Trust within communication is very important—especially to an adolescent. As a parent, you may increase the likelihood that your child will discuss difficult topics with you if he or she understands and is comfortable with the boundaries you establish regarding your conversations. Confidentiality is one boundary that is addressed in the module.

Have you discussed your confidentiality boundaries with your child? If so, is your child aware of the steps that will be followed if you need to break confidentiality? Does your child understand the reason for and the importance of breaking that confidentiality?



Group discussion notes:



Think about the rules you have established in your home. Are there rules in your house that you consider “non-negotiable”? What is your reasoning behind those rules?



Group discussion notes:



Module 2: Positive Communication Discussion Questions and Activity



I-statements are a great way to start a conversation in a positive manner. Think about a recent statement you made to your child that was NOT well-received. Rephrase that statement into an I-statement using the following formula:

I (Emotion)-----when (Behavior)----- I (How the Behavior Affects Me).....and I Need (Requested Behavior).

How do you think the conversation could have been different if you had used the I-statement instead? If you are having difficulty rephrasing the sentence, write what you said in the space below, and consider sharing the statement at next week's meeting.



Group discussion notes:



Module 2: Positive Communication Activity



Read through the parent sentences below and rephrase each sentence using an I-Statement. Refer to the I-Statement formula for assistance.

1. Your room is such a mess! Why can't you clean up after yourself?

2. Hurry up! We are always waiting on you to get out the door.

3. How many times do I need to remind you to do your homework?



Group discussion notes:



Module 2: Active Listening Discussion Questions



Active listening can help you build trust in your parent-child relationship, can help you better understand what your child needs, and can help you find solutions together. Active listening can also prevent or diffuse conflicts.

Select a time this week when you will practice actively listening to your child. Refer to the *Active Listening* handout in the Parent Toolkit for reference to the four key steps. Reflect on this experience. How did you feel when conversing with your child while using active listening? How did your child respond? Did you find any of the steps to be easier or more challenging than others?



Group discussion notes:



Module 2: Impact vs. Intention Discussion Questions



Intention is what you are trying to say. Impact is what the other person hears. Module 2 shares multiple examples of parent statements, information regarding the parent's intent, and explanations for how the phrase that was spoken may have impacted the child.

Think about your recent conversations with your child. Is there something you could have phrased differently to more accurately relay your intent? Write your initial statement and intent in the space below. Then, rephrase the statement to "say it better." What impact do you think the revised statement might have had on your child?



Group discussion notes:



Step 4: Prepare Additional Questions for Meeting 2



Note any additional questions you may have for the group or the facilitator.



Group discussion notes:

Meeting 2



Discussion of Module 1 and 2

Introduction and Communication

Meeting (60 minutes)
Homework (60 minutes)

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Step 2: Discuss Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Return to *Meeting 1, Step 3: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions*. Discuss the activities and questions as a group. What new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting? Note them in the magenta boxes under your responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after Meeting 1.

Step 3: Complete Homework [For discussion in Meeting 3]

_____ Complete Module 3: Developmental Milestones

_____ Complete Module 4: Mental Health

_____ Prepare to discuss the topics addressed in Modules 3 and 4 during the *next meeting* by answering the questions in Step 4. If you have any questions you would like to ask during the discussion, note them in Step 5.

Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Use the blue boxes on the next few pages to prepare your responses for the *next meeting*. During the *Meeting 3* group discussion, you can use the magenta boxes to record your notes.

As you complete these questions and activities, recognize that changes will not happen overnight. You will need to use the strategies and skills learned throughout Branch Out consistently in your everyday life to see the desired changes in your child's reactions or behaviors. Keep practicing.

When you meet as a group, share and celebrate the small, short-term positive changes you see with your child, and consider what the long-term benefits may be with continued use of the skills and strategies you are learning with Branch Out!



Module 3: Physical, Emotional, and Mental Changes Discussion Questions



One of the most significant milestones that all adolescents experience is puberty. Every child is unique and will develop on his or her own timeline. These changes can take up to 4 years to complete!

Think about your own experience as you went through puberty. What conversations did you have, or wish you would have had, with your parent or caregiver about how your body was changing? How do you want your child to feel about his or her own experience?



Group discussion notes:



Adolescents experience multiple emotional changes as they develop that may include the following:

- Aggression
- Cognitive changes
- Depression
- Low self-esteem, and
- Mood swings

Think about the emotional changes that you may have seen in your child in recent months. How can you support your child through the challenging emotional changes your child may experience?



Group discussion notes:



Module 3: Older Teens Discussion Questions



Older teens go through several changes as they learn more about themselves. Complex feelings and emotions arise as they become interested in romantic relationships, build independence, and explore his or her own identity. Think about the changes you have noticed in your child. What supports can you offer your child as your child experiences these feelings and emotions and navigate these changes?



Group discussion notes:



Module 4: The Importance of Your Child's Mental Health

Discussion Questions



Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being and affects how we think, feel, and act. Children with good mental health can do the following:

- interact positively with family members and friends,
- meet and achieve educational milestones, and
- actively participate in their community.

In which of the areas listed above do you feel your child is currently experiencing success? Are there areas in which your child may be struggling or in which your child could benefit from additional support?



Group discussion notes:



Module 4: Early Warning Signs Discussion Questions



You were introduced to a list of potential risks for mental health problems and early warning signs. After reviewing this list, consider whether your child is exhibiting any of the mentioned behaviors. Are any of these behaviors creating a concern for you?



Group discussion notes:



One of the first steps parents can take if they are worried about their teen's mental health is to ***talk to the child about the child's emotions, feelings, and behaviors in a nonconfrontational way.*** Talking to the other adults in your child's life, such as your child's school counselor, pediatrician, or spiritual leader, can also be important.

Make a list of the other adults in your child's life whom you can check in with to get a full picture of your child's mental health. Bonus: Put a star next to one adult from your list. Make an effort to check in with this individual about your child this week. You could initiate a phone call, email, or in-person visit.



Group discussion notes:



As a parent, you can help your child feel happy and positive about himself or herself. Module 4 lists the following examples:

Put a star (★) next to the things you do now. Circle (○) the examples from the list below that you would like to practice with your child.

- Show love and affection
- Spend undistracted or focused time with your child
- Encourage your child to talk with you about his or her feelings
- Be interested in what's happening in your child's life
- Encourage your child to engage in physical activity (you could join your child in a run or walk through a neighborhood park!)
- Provide your child with nutritious foods
- Encourage your child to get enough sleep

How would you like to show, or offer, more mental health support to your child?
Select one example from the list above to practice with your child this week.



Group discussion notes:



Step 5: Prepare Additional Questions for Meeting 3



Note any additional questions you may have for the group or the facilitator.



Group discussion notes:

Meeting 3



Discussion of Module 3 and 4 Developmental Milestones and Mental Health

Meeting (60 minutes)
Homework (60 minutes)

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Step 2: Discuss Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Return to Meeting 2, Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions. Discuss the activities and questions as a group. What new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting? Note them in the magenta boxes under your responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after Meeting 2.

Step 3: Complete Homework [For discussion in Meeting 4]

_____ Complete Module 5: Working Together and Growing as a Family

_____ Review, and download, if desired, the resources for Module 5

- The Importance of Positive Self-Image
- Developmental Assets Tip Sheet
- Family Meeting Tip Sheet
- Family Meeting Action Plan
- Physical Activity Guidelines
- 5210 Monthly Challenge

_____ Complete Module 6: Setting Expectations and Encouraging Personal Growth

_____ Review, and download, if desired, the following resources for Module 6:

- Setting Boundaries and Expectations
- Safe Driving Pledge
- How to talk to your Teen about Substance Abuse
- Autonomy

_____ Prepare to discuss the topics addressed in Modules 5 and 6 during the *next meeting* by answering the questions in Step 4. If you have any questions you would like to ask during the discussion, note them in Step 5.



Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Use the blue boxes on the next few pages to prepare your responses for the *next meeting*. During the *Meeting 4* group discussion, you can use the magenta boxes to record your notes.

As you complete these questions and activities, recognize that changes will not happen overnight. You will need to use the strategies and skills learned throughout Branch Out consistently in your everyday life to see the desired changes in your child's reactions or behaviors. Keep practicing.

When you meet as a group, share and celebrate the small, short-term positive changes you see with your child, and consider what the long-term benefits may be with continued use of the skills and strategies you are learning with Branch Out!



Module 5: Developmental Assets Activity



Research shows that when a child has strong developmental assets, the child is more likely to get good grades and do well in school, to positively contribute and be actively involved in the community, and to recognize and understand the differences between people and value differences. These children are also less likely to encounter problems with alcohol use, engage in violence, partake in illicit drug use, and participate in sexually risky behaviors.

The *Developmental Assets Tip Sheet* in the Parent Toolkit lists internal and external assets and ways in which you can help your child develop each asset. Review the tip sheet. Select one internal asset and one external asset that you would like to focus on with your child this week. List the assets in the space below, and describe how you plan to provide support to your adolescent.



Group discussion notes:



Module 5: Family Meetings Discussion Questions and Activity

One way to provide a supportive environment for your child is to establish a routine of holding family meetings. Family meetings are a safe way for children to discuss topics and concerns openly with their parents, and they offer opportunities for parents to learn more about each family member's needs and desires.

Does your family regularly hold family meetings? If so, what does your family meeting look like (e.g., who attends, how often do you hold the meetings, what topics do you discuss)? Is there anything you would like to add or change to your family meetings now that you've completed Module 5?



Group discussion notes:



If your family does not currently hold family meetings, how do you think your family members would feel about implementing a routine family meeting into your household? What topics might you discuss?



Group discussion notes:



Meeting 3



Select a day this week to hold a family meeting. Use the space below to note the time, date, and agenda. Use the *Family Meeting Tip Sheet* in the Parent Toolkit section of Module 5 for additional information and guideline suggestions.



Group discussion notes:



Module 5: Planning for Family Time Discussion Questions



Spending planned quality time with your child promotes an emotionally healthy parent-child attachment and models good behaviors for your child as your child forms friendships and romantic relationships.

How do you typically plan for family activities? Do you involve your child and your family in the planning process? What does that process look like?



Group discussion notes:



Meeting 3



Every child needs time, attention, and affection from parents and other caring adults to feel a sense of significance and belonging. Invite your child to help you plan a family activity to do together this week. How did your child or your family react to being a part of the planning process? Were you able to develop a successful plan?



Group discussion notes:



Module 6: Setting Expectations and Encouraging Personal Growth

Discussion Questions



Adolescence is a time when friendships become especially important, and your teen's friends can be a big influence on your teen's choices and behaviors. As friendships become a bigger part of your adolescent's life, your child may ask you more frequently if your child's friends can visit your home and if your child can visit a friend's home. You will want to be prepared for these situations, so your adolescent knows your expectations for those visits.

This module shares that for boundaries, limits, rules, and expectations to help children become successful adults, these restrictions and opportunities need to be developmentally appropriate.

What rules do you have in your household that are related to your child having friends over at your home? For example, some families do not allow friends over when a parent is not home. Some families may require that a bedroom door remains open when friends are visiting.



Group discussion notes:



Put a star (★) next to the rule for each of the following guidelines it meets below:

- Your adolescent understands the rule.
- Your child was involved in the development of the rule.
- The expectations of the rule can be met by your child.

Based on what you have reviewed in Module 6, is there anything about the rule that can be improved? Some factors you may want to consider follow:

1. Is the rule clear and concise?
2. Are your expectations for your child realistic for the child's age, maturity, and ability?
3. Do you state the "why" for the rule?
4. Is the rule still relevant for your child based on your family's current circumstances?
5. Can you appropriately monitor and enforce this rule with the way in which it is currently stated?

Use the area below to rephrase your rule if needed.



Group discussion notes:



How do you think this rule might change as your child gets older?



Group discussion notes:



Module 6: Achievement Discussion Questions



All teens will have homework. Although many adolescents dread doing schoolwork at home, completing homework is important because it helps your child relearn information and retain what your child is learning over longer periods of time.

This module outlines ways in which you can support your child as your child completes homework. Does your child have a homework routine? What does it look like? You may consider talking with your child to learn more about your child's approach to homework or overall feelings regarding school.



Group discussion notes:



What could you do to better support your child with his or her homework or overall feelings regarding school? Refer to the *Tips for Homework Engagement* and green boxes in the module for suggestions. You may also consider talking with your child to gather additional input and insight.



Group discussion notes:



Module 6: Safety Discussion Questions



As adolescents build their social circles, they may be exposed to unsafe behaviors, or may even engage in behaviors that are known to have safety issues, such as risky driving and exposure to drugs and alcohol. Establishing rules to promote good choices and having discussions about the dangers of various topics are important because they can help keep your child safe and healthy.

Have you spoken with your child about any of the safety issues addressed in this module? Have you developed any specific rules about any of these issues? If you have not had conversations or set rules regarding these safety issues, why haven't you?



Group discussion notes:



If you feel that some of these safety issues do not apply to your child (e.g., your child is still too young), when do you plan to have these conversations with your child? What safety-related rules might be beneficial for you to begin enforcing with your child? Use the *Safe Driving Pledge* and *How to talk to your Teen about Substance Abuse* resources from the Toolkit for guidance.



Group discussion notes:



Module 6: Independence and Decision-Making Discussion Questions



Learning to make appropriate and healthy decisions can help children establish independence and autonomy. Parents can help teens learn to be independent in emotional, behavioral, and values-based ways. One of the ways to help your teenager develop emotional autonomy is to ensure that your household has family cohesion. Family cohesion exists when there is warmth and affection, closeness, and support in family relationships.

Review the following examples of family cohesion. Put a star (★) next to the examples in which you feel your family is experiencing success. Circle the examples you feel could be improved upon for your family.

- Family members know each other's close friends.
- Family members enjoy spending some amount of their free time together.
- Family members know who in the household is responsible for specific roles and tasks.
- Family sets, and accomplishes, goals together.
- There are clear and consistent consequences when a family member breaks a rule.
- If someone has a problem, the person knows he or she can trust his or her family to help resolve it.
- Family members can talk through disagreements and come to a positive resolution.

What are some other examples of family cohesion in your family?



Group discussion notes:



Select one example of family cohesion that you circled as needing improvement. What action can you initiate in the near future to improve this area?



Group discussion notes:



Step 5: Prepare Additional Questions for Meeting 4



Note any additional questions you may have for the group or the facilitator.



Group discussion notes:

Meeting 4



Discussion of Module 5 and 6 **Working Together and Growing as a Family and** **Setting Expectations and Encouraging Personal Growth**

Meeting *(60 minutes)*
Homework *(60 minutes)*

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Step 2: Discuss Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Return to *Meeting 3, Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions*. Discuss the activities and questions as a group. What new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting? Note them in the magenta boxes under your responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after Meeting 3.

Step 3: Complete Homework [For discussion in Meeting 5]

_____ Complete Module 7: Healthy Relationships and Sexuality

_____ Review, and download, if desired, the resources for Module 7

- Modeling Healthy Relationships
- Parental Self Care
- Credible Resources for Teen Relationships and Teen Domestic Violence
- Credible Resources for Your Teen Sex, Pregnancy, and STDs
- Preventing Sexually Transmitted Diseases

_____ Complete Module 8: Technology in Family Life



_____ Review, and download, if desired, the resources for Module 8

- Acronyms and Teen Codes
- Tips for Online Safety at Home
- Talking Tips to Protect your Child from Online Predators and Grooming
- Screen Time Recommendations
- Physical Activity Guidelines
- Resources to Navigate Appropriate Media
- Harmful Digital Footprint Impacts
- Parent Guide: Internet Safety
- Safety and Social Media
- Internet Safety Pledge
- Helping Kids Fight Cyberbullying
- Tips to Assist with Cyberbullying
- Respectful Communication for Pre-Teens and Teens
- Teaching Teens about Hate Speech

_____ Prepare to discuss the topics addressed in Modules 7 and 8 during the next meeting by answering the questions in Step 4. If you have any questions you would like to ask during the discussion, note them in Step 5.

Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Use the blue boxes on the next few pages to prepare your responses for the *next meeting*. During the *Meeting 5* group discussion, you can use the magenta boxes to record your notes.

As you complete these questions and activities, recognize that changes will not happen overnight. You will need to use the strategies and skills learned throughout Branch Out consistently in your everyday life to see the desired changes in your child's reactions or behaviors. Keep practicing.

When you meet as a group, share and celebrate the small, short-term positive changes you see with your child, and consider what the long-term benefits may be with continued use of the skills and strategies you are learning with Branch Out!



Module 7: Healthy Relationships Activity



One of the best ways for your child to have healthy relationships is for you to understand and model healthy relationships to your child. Examples of positive behavior you could model follow:

- Use “I” statements when talking with your child.
- Give your teen your full attention when your teen is talking to you.
- Calmly and rationally talk through challenges with your child.
- When disagreeing with your teen, try to find a “middle ground” solution that both parties are comfortable with.
- Continually demonstrate that, for the most part, other human beings, regardless of differences, hold value and deserve respect.
- Discuss with others what you are comfortable and uncomfortable with.
- Show care and compassion and expect nothing in return.
- Own your mistakes, and discuss them with others.

Put a star (★) next to the behaviors above that you currently model when interacting with your child. Circle the behaviors that may need to be improved. Write down any additional behaviors you feel might be good to model.

Review the list above and the *Modeling Healthy Relationship Behavior* guide available in the Parent Toolkit. Select one behavior from the list above to work on this week. Use the space below to reflect on this experience. Did you notice anything different in your child’s interactions with you?



Group discussion notes:



Module 7: Risky Behaviors in Teen Romantic Relationships

Discussion Questions



Healthy relationships in the adolescent years can help promote trust and security, but they may also promote risk-taking behaviors and lead to other challenges. Module 7 introduces topics such as sexting, teen dating violence, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Depending on your child's age and maturity, you may feel that you are years away from encountering these risks, or you may be navigating one or more of these issues now.

Based on the information shared in the module, do you feel you are aware of the available resources that can help you provide guidance and support for your child in these areas? If not, in what areas would you like additional support?



Group discussion notes:



Module 7: How to Talk to Your Child About Sex and STDs



Having ongoing open and honest discussions about relationships, sex, and associated risks with your teen is extremely important. These discussions can help your child stay safe and grow into a confident, caring, and compassionate adult. Although these conversations can be difficult, it is critical that you to talk with your child early and often.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), some factors that can make a difference as you talk with your teen about matters related to sex and relationships include the following:

- **HOW** you talk about it
- **HOW OFTEN** you talk about it
- If the **TEEN FEELS** he or she is **IMPORTANT** and **LOVED** by his or her parents, and
- **WHAT** is said

Think about your conversations, or lack of conversations, about sex and the associated risks with your parent or caregiver when you were an adolescent. What impact did these conversations have on you? If relevant, what were the positive take-aways from these conversations? What might you say or do differently in your conversations with your child?



Group discussion notes:



Have you had conversations with your adolescent about sex and the associated risks? Why or why not? What topics or information would be helpful for you to discuss in future conversations with your child?



Group discussion notes:



Multiple resources are available in the Parent Toolkit to help parents and caregivers navigate these difficult and important topics. In the space below, note the resource(s) that may be the most beneficial and relevant to you and your child. You may also choose to print or download the resource(s) for future reference.



Group discussion notes:



Module 8: Technology in Family Life Discussion Questions



Technology is a constantly evolving tool that is woven into modern life. With digital media platforms, like social media, videogames, and communication apps, there are many ways your child can connect with people across the world. With some guidance from you, technology can be a positive tool that helps your child engage with and learn to be a part of a larger world.

List the specific ways in which your child engages with technology. You may want to talk with your child to understand how, why, and when your child is using technology each day.



Group discussion notes:



In Module 8, you learn that the appropriate use of technology and digital media can positively affect adolescent self-image; peer engagement; aspirational, career engagement; and entrepreneurial spirit. However, it also comes with risks such as obesity, sleep disturbances, isolation, and exposure to inappropriate content. Using technology and digital media can also increase your child's potential for forming inappropriate relationships or becoming the target of grooming.

What safeguards do you have in place to protect against negative situations that may arise out of digital media use? Safeguards may include setting screen-time limits, putting screens down – or turning them off – during family dinner time, storing screens overnight in a common area like the kitchen, and/or encouraging your child to participate in physical activity each day.



Group discussion notes:



Now that you are aware of the potential risks of digital media, what additional safeguards, actions, or conversations can you incorporate into your family's interactions with and use of technology? Refer to the many resources in the Parent Toolkits throughout Module 8 for guidance.



Group discussion notes:



Module 8: Family Media Plan Discussion Questions



Family Media Plans are a great way to negotiate expectations and rules and set goals. Does your family have a Family Media Plan? How is this plan working for you and your family? If your family does not have a Family Media Plan, revisit Module 8 to create your plan. Your child can also be part of the development. You may choose to save and print the plan for future reference.



Group discussion notes:



Module 8: Bullying Discussion Questions



Parents need to be aware of the possibility that their child is may be bullied (or may be bullying) and the effects the child may experience because of the bullying. Bullying, like many other youth topics, should be openly discussed with your child.

Have you had conversations with your child about bullying? What did you discuss, and how did your child respond? If you have not had a conversation with your child about bullying, make a plan to talk with your child. Use the space below to outline the topics you would like to cover.



Group discussion notes:



Bullies and victims of bullying – including cyberbullying – have an increased risk for exhibiting problem behaviors (e.g., aggressive, verbal/physical altercations, blaming others). They also have a greater risk for mental health issues. Module 8 outlines warning signs that your child may be bullied and illustrates the warning signs that your child may be bullying.

Based on the warning signs listed, do you have any concerns about your child? If yes, what concerns do you have, and who could you contact for help? Potential support may be found from teachers, school counselors, and school administrators.



Group discussion notes:

Meeting 5



Discussion of Module 7 and 8 **Healthy Relationships and Sexuality and** **Technology in Family Life**

Meeting (60 minutes)
Homework (60 minutes)

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Step 2: Discuss Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Return to Meeting 4, Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions. Discuss the activities and questions as a group. What new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting? Note them in the magenta boxes under your responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after Meeting 4.

Step 3: Complete Homework [For discussion in Meeting 6]

- _____ Complete the Wrap-Up.
- _____ Prepare to discuss the Wrap-Up during the *next meeting* by answering the questions in Step 4.
- _____ Review the Thrive website (<https://thrive.psu.edu/>), and tell your facilitator what Thrive initiative program is most appropriate for your family to complete next.

Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Use the blue boxes on the next few pages to prepare your responses for the *next meeting*. During the *Meeting 6* group discussion, you can use the magenta boxes to record your notes.

As you complete these questions and activities, recognize that changes will not happen overnight. You will need to use the strategies and skills learned throughout Branch Out consistently in your everyday life to see the desired changes in your child's reactions or behaviors. Keep practicing.

When you meet as a group, share and celebrate the small, short-term positive changes you see with your child, and consider what the long-term benefits may be with continued use of the skills and strategies you are learning with Branch Out!



Conclusion/Wrap-Up Module Discussion Questions



Which topic discussed in Branch Out was the most beneficial to you as a parent? Why?



Group discussion notes:



You were introduced to multiple families throughout Branch Out, and each family encountered a different challenging situation or developmental milestone. Which family or families' situation did you most relate to and why?



Group discussion notes:



Meeting 5



What strategies or skills did you learn in Branch Out that will help you achieve the goals you have for your family?



Group discussion notes:



Discuss your answers to the following questions.



What has changed about your interactions with your child since we started? Do you notice a difference in the way you respond to your child's behaviors? Do you notice a difference in the way your child responds to you?



Grow discussion notes:



Think about a recent situation in which you used a strategy you learned in Branch Out. How does your current reaction compare to how you may have reacted prior to engaging in Branch Out training? What was different? How did your child respond?



Group discussion notes:

Meeting 6



Wrap Up and Resource Sharing 45 minutes

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Meeting Events

- _____ Complete any required follow-up paperwork.
- _____ Share the program from Thrive that would be most appropriate for your family to complete next.
- _____ Share a timeline for when you think you'll start the next program [Optional].
- _____ Download your Completion Certificate.
- _____ Collect any additional resources that the facilitator has prepared for you.

Step 2: Discuss Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Return to Meeting 5, Step 4: Prepare Community Building Activities/Discussion Questions. Discuss the activities and questions as a group. What new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting? Note them in the magenta boxes under your responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after Meeting 5.



Step 3: Register for the next Thrive Program [Optional]

For more in-depth exploration of specified topics related to school age children, visit the Thrive website (<https://thrive.psu.edu/>), and review the supplemental module content for the most up-to-date offerings.

Additional online Thrive programming is available for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 18. Visit the Thrive website, and, if interested, register for the next Thrive initiative that is applicable for your developing child(ren).

Thrive Initiative Program Areas			
Universal Parenting Programs			
Take Root	Sprout	Grow	Branch Out
Infants (0 to 6 months)	Preschool (3 to 5 years)	Grades K–5 (5 to 10 years)	Grades 6–12 (10 to 18 years)
Infants (6 to 12 months)			
Infants & Toddlers (1 to 3 years)			

Thank you for completing this hybrid implementation of Branch Out! We hope you will frequently visit the Thrive website to continue to learn positive parenting practices, stress management techniques, and ways to promote physical health throughout your child's development.