



### **Teaching Youth about Personal Hygiene**

As a mentor to at risk youth it is important to understand that many of our youth have not had a parent, or caring adult to talk with them regarding good **personal hygiene**. As adults we know that poor hygiene can put youth at a disadvantage for employment and peer acceptance. Mentors have an opportunity to teach a positive and lasting lesson about this topic. We understand that this might be a sensitive and uncomfortable subject so we have outlined a few ways to approach this situation.

- 1) The first step is to be empathetic. Because puberty is an incredibly confusing time and your youth might have many questions and not know how to ask them. It is important that you give them a safe space to ask these types of questions.
- 2) Be relatable. We all went through puberty and we understand how the changes in our bodies affected us as teens. Try to begin the conversation with an experience you had, or a lesson that you learned while going through puberty.
- 3) Reassure your youth that what he or she is experiencing is normal, and that there are steps he/she can take to avoid unwanted smells, acne, or greasy hair.
- 4) Some basic hygiene topics include (and some sentence starters):
  - a. Showering (shampoo, conditioning, and body wash) "I really don't like showering in the morning when it's cold, but....." "If I don't follow my showering routine I....."
  - b. Preventing acne (face washing) "I remember when I got my first pimple, it was..."
  - c. Oral hygiene (brushing and flossing) "Sometimes I wish I didn't have to brush and floss my teeth, but I know how important it is because....."
  - d. Underarm care (deodorant) "Wearing deodorant is important because.....and trying all the different scents can be fun!"
  - e. Changing clothing (laundry) "I remember the first time I did laundry, it was....." It is not always fun, but it feels nice to wear clean clothes."

*Note from Match Coordinators: The above topics are only suggestions, if your youth is struggling with a different personal hygiene issue it is recommended that it be the focus of the conversation. As always, we are here to support you as you build this important relationship. Please do not hesitate to contact us at 303.756.9285 if you have specific questions or just need additional ideas as to how to approach your youth about a specific topics.*