

IMMERSE

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Ten Practical Ways to Connect Your Youth to the Older Adults in Your Community

1. **Create a mentoring program** where you ask older adults to sign up to spend a segment of time with a student once a month. Interview the adults and then assign them to the best fit. Create a sheet of ideas for the adults that gives some ideas for things to do with students and some conversation-starting topics.
2. **Ask older adults in your community to volunteer for a single event.** By doing this, you will not only build your ever-needed list of volunteers for your youth ministry, but you will be putting older and younger people in the same space. This is often the hardest part of getting over the misunderstanding students and adults have about each other.
3. **Create service initiatives for your students geared toward the elderly in your church.** Survey the congregation to find out what yard work, housework, general chores, etc., need to be done. Then set up times for small groups of students to go their houses and serve them.
4. **Learn each other's stories.** Set up a time for the elderly to come into your youth group. Create small groups and have the participants (both young and old) share their stories in those groups. Create a sheet of reflection questions to help students and adults digest what they're learning.
5. **Create a periodic meal program.** This would be a time once a month or once a semester where the elderly would cook a meal for the youth. Then the next time, the youth would cook for the elderly. Make sure that everyone eats together though, so as to ensure real connection.
6. **Life lessons morning.** Create a forum, maybe on a series of Sunday morning (or any other day), where elderly people from your community come in and give life lessons (cooking, sewing, sports, mechanics, simple cleaning, etc.). Then have the youth respond by teaching youth-relevant lessons (such as technology—email, Facebook, Google, etc) to the elderly.
7. **Early morning prayer breakfast.** The youth would serve the elderly a before-school breakfast. During this time, they could share prayer requests and get to know each other.
8. **Movie Night.** Have a double header movie night. Let the elderly pick the first movie. They should first explain why they picked it and why they like it. Then

let the youth pick the second movie and do the same. You could have some fun with this, perhaps by dressing up like you're going to the Oscars or by simply having a lot of food and comfortable seating around. (Make sure the youth pick a movie that is not going to be offensive to the elderly, and you may need to regulate the lengths of the chosen movies. It wouldn't be fair to make either age group sit through something that bores them to tears for four hours each.)

9. **Game Show.** Create a game show with facts that span from the older generations to the younger ones. Invite the youth and the elderly to play on a Sunday morning. Make sure to create it in a way that gives room for conversation around the questions and answers. For example, maybe ask, "Why do you think it is important to know the answer to this question?"
10. **Get your youth up in front of the adult congregation.** This is something we should be doing on a regular basis—increasing our communication of what is going on in the youth group. Highlight the amazing things that God is doing. Have your students tell stories about what God has done and is doing in their lives. Use them to facilitate moments and pieces of your worship service.

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