

THE SEARCHING YEARS...a series of open-end films

Teachers' guide for five titles / Theme: FAMILY



Everything in these films is real.  
It occurred spontaneously, as you  
see it.

Although the film concept is  
unusual, it came about quite  
simply. For several months, I had  
been meeting with young people,  
collecting material for educa-  
tional films on adolescence.  
Finally we all realized that the  
meetings themselves offered a  
valuable film format.

So I chose 20 of the young people  
from varying backgrounds, added a  
role-play adviser, and we filmed  
for six days.

*Kent MacKenzie*

Producer-Director

produced by DIMENSION FILMS

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distributed by CHURCHILL FILMS

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## **THE SEARCHING YEARS...a series of open-end films**

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OTHER FILMS IN THIS SERIES will complement these five,  
to form sequences under basic themes, such as:

ROLES IN THE FAMILY

COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY

FINDING IDENTITY

LOVE AND SECURITY

VALUES AND SEX

MARRIAGE

ETHNIC AND CLASS DIFFERENCES

Each film can be used alone, or shown in any sequence.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE FILMS:

THE MOST IMPORTANT advice we can give you is to SEE A FILM BEFORE USING IT. These films are provocative and moving for adults as well as students--it is important to have some time to reflect on your own reactions before meeting your class.

### THE TEACHING GOALS:

1. To help each student to understand himself better--to know his own feelings, values and expectations.
2. To reassure students that they are not strange, different, or alone--others share their problems and feelings.
3. To sharpen students' ability to listen, to understand and empathize with others.
4. To help students express themselves more honestly and fearlessly.

5. To help students learn to deal with personal stress by sharing it with other people.
6. To help students develop more satisfying social relationships.

THE TEACHING METHOD is to help those students who wish to, to bring feelings and conflicts into the open. In the relatively safe setting of the classroom, various ways of handling these feelings and conflicts can be tried and compared. The more deeply each student involves himself, the more he will sharpen his evaluative skills and increase his ability to show his feelings and respond to the feelings of others.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE is that of facilitator. He must invite open expression of ideas and feelings, help clarify meanings, and encourage inter-action. He

must be non-judgmental, but this does NOT mean he must be neutral. There is a world of difference between a teacher saying "I think you are wrong," and his saying "I feel differently about that than you do." The former passes judgment and ends communication; the latter invites comparison and continues communication.

#### SOME CAUTIONS:

1. Sociological and psychological analysis of some of the films is fascinating--to adults. It may be meaningless and even irritating to students. They need concrete applications to their own lives, with concepts limited to those they can use.
2. It may also be very tempting to use events in the films to bolster one's personal moral code, whether it be traditional or avant-garde.

Such attempts will close off communication between teacher and students, and will defeat the teaching goals.

3. It is also difficult to avoid letting the discussion degenerate into a free-for-all rap session, with the teacher playing the role of Pal. For instance, we have found that the opening discussion after some of these films is apt to be a general attack on parents, with students clearly enjoying the chance to blow off some steam.

But more is usually happening beneath the surface; some students with non-conforming opinions may be reluctant to speak up. The teacher's job is to help create the climate of trust which will enable students to take a chance and explore the deeper questions.

4. The discussion need not go on at length, nor is it necessary to reach a consensus. Once each student has been stirred to examine his own position, and there has been some fruitful interaction, it may be best to end.

#### SOME TIPS ON ROLE-PLAYING:

1. DON'T RUSH IN before your class is ready. Let them warm up to the issues for a while. As they go at it, watch for those who seem most involved. Call on them



to demonstrate--"Why don't you show us?"

(WARNING: Try to avoid the tendency to short-cut this stage by calling on your "old-reliables." Maybe if you hold back a short while, someone unexpected will jump in.)

2. HELP THEM GET STARTED by setting the scene concretely--"Where are you?" (moving chairs and tables) "What time of day is it?" "What is each person doing?"
3. TRUST YOUR JUDGMENT to let the role-play go on, or to interrupt. It does not have to finish.
4. GET FEEDBACK FROM THE CLASS--You may ask the role-players to hold their positions while you ask the class--"Do you believe what is happening?" "How does \_\_\_\_\_ feel?" "Would you like to ask any of the role-

players any questions?" The role-players answer in character.

5. SWITCH players. You may want to change roles among the players. Or, if a class member has strong feelings, you may substitute him as a role-player. Always try to INVOLVE the students who express themselves.
6. DOUBLING is a technique used in many of the filmed role-plays. Persons who "double" (there may be more than one at a time) try to speak the inner thoughts and feelings of the character.

#### OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

Small group discussion may be a valuable alternative to whole-class discussion. Each group can share its conclusions with the class. This approach may allow for more involvement of quieter students.

Creative writing, using the films as a springboard for stories, poems and plays is another indirect way to allow students to express their responses.





film title: I OWE YOU NOTHING!

length: 10-minutes

SYNOPSIS

Obligations are the issue here. What do children owe their parents, and vice-versa? How does money enter in? What is fair, and how can they agree?

The film opens with a role-play over the issue of controlling the car radio, followed by a lively discussion. There is a space to stop the projector, and then a second role-play, about a mother reading her daughter's private diary.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

(Note: These suggestions are offered in the spirit of this whole series--if anything works for you, take it; if not, do it your own way. You know what's best.)



ROBIN



BOB



IVAN



ANN



BARBARA



BROOKE



MIKE

### INTRODUCING THE FILM:

You may want to say something like this:

Some of the hottest family disputes are over obligations. For example, do your parents owe you financial support? Do you owe them "good" behavior?

Obligations link up emotions with moral values. A person who is disappointed may feel both hurt and morally offended. "It's not right!" says the parent. "You're not being fair!" says the young person.

It's important to consider what your own standards are. What obligations (if any) do you accept and expect?

### AT THE DISCUSSION BREAK

Your class may feel strongly enough that you can just let them dive in:

1. How do you feel about all this?

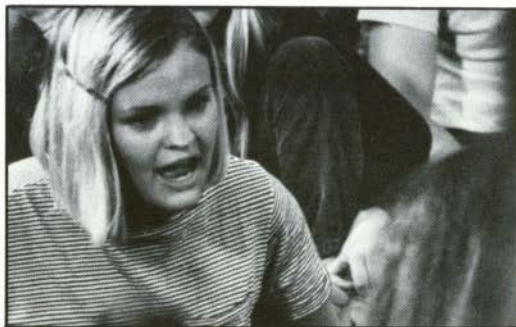
2. If you were there, which side would you be on?

Or, you may choose to point the discussion:

3. What is the issue between Bob and the others?

4. Ivan accuses Bob of "just wanting free room and board and your own way". Do you think that's what Bob wants?

5. In the car-radio role-play, the Mother claims the right to turn off the radio "Because this is my car." The Son asks her to be "open enough just to listen." What do you think was happening between them? Were they talking about the same thing?



When you are ready, you may want to dig deeper into personal beliefs and experiences:

6. Ann says: "I've come to the conclusion that I don't owe anybody anything unless it's what I believe I owe them." How do you feel?
7. Bob feels that his parents owe him what he wants "because they brought me into the world." Do you?
8. Do you ever feel, like Ivan, that the only reason your parents had you is so you could do things for them?
9. Bob asks, "What's my obligation to my parents?" How would you answer?

When you judge that the issues have been brought out, you may want your students to see how they apply to the diary role-play:

10. OK, here's a totally different situation where similar issues come up.

Or, you may want to set it up more:

11. The issue of obligation can cut pretty deep. For example, young people feel their parents owe them a certain amount of privacy. And parents feel that young people owe them a certain amount of information about their private lives. How do you hit a balance?

Or, you may want your students to role-play the diary situation before showing the filmed version. (See "Some Tips on Role-Playing"):

12. For example, many young people keep diaries and notebooks of private thoughts and experiences. These can be pretty intimate and revealing. Suppose you kept such a diary, and your mother managed to read it, and she found something in there that upset her. If

she confronted you, how do you think it would go? Can anyone imagine himself in that situation? Can anyone play the mother--she feels shut out of her child's life; she doesn't know what's going on.

AFTER THE FILM:

Again, it may be best to start by letting the class find its own way:

13. What's going on here?
  14. What do you think will happen next?
  15. How do you think each person feels?
- You may choose to point the discussion more:
16. Do you think a Mother has "a right to know"?
  17. The root of much of this discussion is feelings about money. Buying the car--paying for dancing lessons--paying for

college--how many material things do you feel your parents owe you? Do you owe them anything in return?

18. In the discussion, Robin argues to Bob, "You have the obligation of respect to your parents." But, in the role-play, when her Mother says, "You owe me respect," Robin replies heatedly, "I owe you nothing!" How do you account for this apparent contradiction?

You may want your students to role-play after the filmed version:

19. How do you think they could have handled the situation better? Suppose you had been the Mother (or Daughter)--how would you have acted?

film title:

MOM, WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN?

length: 13 minutes

SYNOPSIS

How can young people get parents to listen and respond? Is it a matter of picking the right moment and approach, or is it something deeper? What can each son or daughter do about it?

There is a space to stop the projector, followed by a role-play in which a daughter tries to reach her mother.

INTRODUCING THE FILM:

You may want to say something like this:

Even in the happiest families, people sometimes find it hard to talk to each other. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and kids. When you have trouble getting your parents to listen to you, what can you do about it?



BARBARA



KRISTEN



ROBIN



OLIVIA



MIKE S.



IVAN



LYNDAL



AILEEN



ANN

AT THE DISCUSSION BREAK:

Your class may feel strongly enough that you can just let them dive in:

1. How do you feel about all this?

Or, you may choose to point the discussion.

2. Lots of people are offering advice to Kristen (who doesn't enjoy talking to her mother). What would you say to her?

3. Ivan has found peace of mind by separating himself from his parents. Still he says he is "not satisfied at all." What would you say to him?

When you are ready, you may want to dig deeper.

4. Kristen and Barbara do not share their mothers' interests (teaching and politics). How important are such shared interests for communications?
5. Each girl gets a different response from her mother-- Olivia's accuses her of being too independent; Barbara's asks her what happened at the meetings (which preceded the filming); Aileen's asks her to pass the salt. What about yours?
6. Barbara has trouble answering her mother's question. Robin and several others accuse her of not trying. Do you feel she should try harder?
7. Robin argues that you must "use strategy" in approaching your parents. How do you feel about that?

To lead up to the filmed role-play, you may want your own students to role-play a similar situation.

8. Can anyone imagine a situation in which it's very important for you to get through to your mother or father, but you just can't seem to make it? Can you describe it for us? How does your parent feel? Can anyone play the parent?

AFTER THE FILM:

Again, it may be best to let the class find its own way.

9. What's going on here?
10. How do you think each person feels?
11. What do you think will happen next?

Some students may feel strongly enough that they could get into the characters and continue the role-play themselves.

You may want to point the discussion more.

12. What do you think Kristen wants from her mother? Do you share any of her feelings?

13. How would you feel if your mother responded like Kristen's?
14. Do you think the mother should try to change?
15. Kristen, portraying her own mother, asks "Why can't you just accept me the way I am?" How would you answer this question?
16. Early in the role-play, the daughter asks, "Don't you ever wonder about things?" The Mother replies, "I think you think too much." What do you think they are trying to say to each other?
17. Ann, speaking Kristen's inner thoughts, says: "Mother, I'm afraid when I grow up I'm going to be like you." Do you recognize that fear?
18. What do you think you can do to reach your own parents more successfully?

film title:

WAIT UNTIL YOUR FATHER GETS HOME!

length: 11 minutes

SYNOPSIS

Male vs. Female Roles are the issue here, especially dominance and submissiveness. Should the man run the family, or the woman, or should they share the power? Is relative strength the best basis for decision-making in the family?

The film opens with a dispute in which several boys advocate male supremacy against one dissenter--another boy. There is a space to stop the projector, followed by a role-play about a mother and father deciding if their son may go to San Francisco.



IVAN



BOB



RICK



ANN



GREG



RUBEN



MIKE S.



### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

(Note: These suggestions are offered in the spirit of this whole series--if anything works for you, take it; if not, do it your own way. You know what's best.)

#### INTRODUCING THE FILM:

You may want to say something like this:

What does it really mean, "To be a Man," or "To be a Woman?"

Is a man strong, self-controlled, and dominant? Is a woman soft, emotional and submissive? Should the husband make the final decisions in the family? Should it be up to the father to "lay down the law?"

It's very important to know what you really believe about this. It will affect how you act in your most important relationships, what you expect out of marriage, and as a parent.

### AT THE DISCUSSION BREAK:

Some girls in your class may be so provoked that all you need to do is get out of the way:

1. Well?
2. How do you feel about this discussion?
3. What's going on here?

To point the discussion, you may wish to use reminders:

4. Whom did you feel was most like you (if anyone)? Why?
5. Whom did you feel was least like you? Why?
6. How do you feel about Ivan's statement: "The co-captain stuff is really nice, but when it comes down to the final decision, yes or no, my wife has to side with me; otherwise, she has no business being my wife."
7. Or Rick: "If the man is physically stronger and as far as weight, stronger,

then the husband would have to make the decision, because he has to do it to his capacity."

8. Rick also feels women cannot make hard decisions "because their role is someone tender rather than hard."
9. But Ruben disagrees, saying "I know a lot of cases where the woman is the one who dominates." He asks, "You'd talk it over wouldn't you?"

When you are ready, you may want to dig deeper.

10. Do you think the "male supremacists" are realistic, based on what you've seen in your own life?
11. Why do you think people get so concerned about power in the family?

Before showing the filmed San Francisco role-play, you may want your students to role-play

the same situation. (See "Some Tips on Role-Playing")

12. How do you feel about Bob's statement about going to San Francisco: "Suppose your mother and father had different opinions. Now someone's got to say to the child either you can or can't go. Who is to say it? I feel the man should. I'm not saying the man shouldn't listen to the woman, but I say he should make the final decision."
13. How do you think you would handle such a situation?



AFTER THE FILM:

Again, it may be best to start by letting the class find its own way.

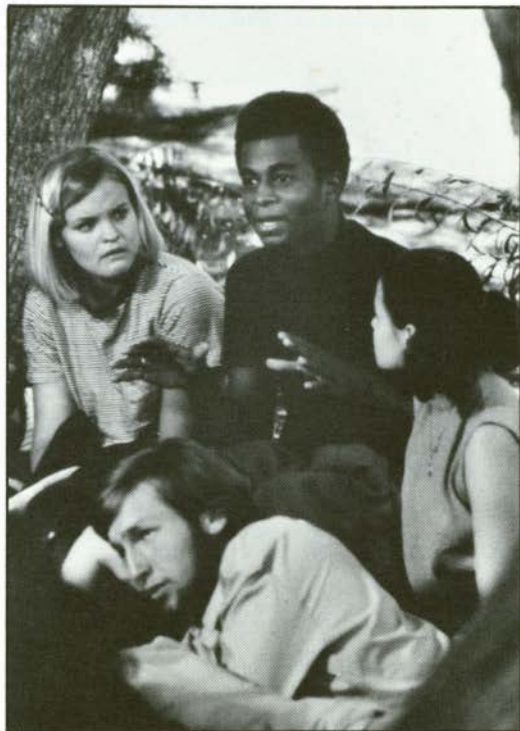
14. How do you feel about this family?
15. What is really going on between the people? How does each one feel?

You may choose to point the discussion more.

16. How would you feel if you were (1) the child, (2) married to the father, (3) married to the mother?
17. Rick was a strong advocate of male supremacy in the discussion--"if the man is physically stronger, etc." and "the woman is tender." How do you account for his behavior as the father?

You may also get value from having your students re-do the role-play.

18. Perhaps none of the versions we have seen shows how you would like to handle such decisions when you become a parent. Would you like to try it once more, and show us a satisfying way of making this decision?



film title:

CAN A PARENT BE HUMAN?

Length: 11½ minutes

SYNOPSIS

How can parents make better contact with their children? The discussion compares ways parents frighten children with ways they make successful contact.

There is a space to stop the projector, followed by a role-play in which a father who has been distant from his son tries to come closer.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

(Note: These suggestions are offered in the spirit of this whole series--if anything works for you, take it; if not, do it your own way. You know what's best.)



GREG



PAUL



RICK



MIKE



KRISTEN

### INTRODUCING THE FILM:

You may want to say something like this:

Have you ever wondered how you will be as a parent? What will your own children think of you when they reach high-school age? Will they know you as a person, not just a "parent"? What can you do as a parent to be close to your children?

### AT THE DISCUSSION BREAK:

Your class may feel strongly enough that you can let them dive in:

1. How do you feel about all this?

Or you may choose to point the discussion.

2. Anyone else have experiences like Paul's?
3. What do you feel is most important between Paul and his Father? What brought them together?
4. Did Paul take any actions

which brought him closer to his Father?

5. What do you think will happen between them now?
6. Just from what you heard, how do you think Paul's relation with his Father compares to Greg's and Ric's (the boys who talked about fear of parents)?

When you are ready, you may want to dig deeper.

7. Several people mention values they will try to remember as parents--Greg will be open-minded; Mike will try for truth and understanding; Barbara says "open and honest"; and Kristen sums it up as "just being human". What will you try to do?
8. Greg, Ric and Paul all talk about fear of their parents, and "the incredible power parents have over kids". Have you felt this?

9. Greg also points out the effect of inconsistency--switching between "fear, love, and kindness can mix you up something terrible." How do you feel about this?

To lead up to the filmed role-play, you may want your own students to role-play a similar situation.



10. You know how it feels when parents are distant or frightening. But how do you suppose parents feel when they are cut off from their children? Let's try a situation where a parent who has been pretty far away from his kid tries to change things.

AFTER THE FILM:

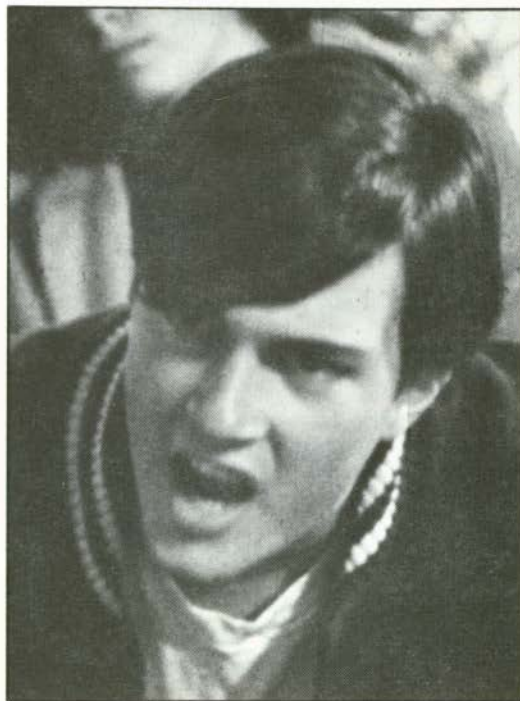
Again, it may be best to let the class find its own way.

11. What's going on here?
12. How do you think each person feels?
13. What do you think will happen next?
- Or, you may choose to point the discussion more.
14. How would you feel if your Father or Mother approached you as in the role-play?

15. If you could talk to the Father in the film, what would you want to ask him? For example--"Why don't you grab your son and sit him down and make him listen?" Or, "Why the sudden interest in your son?"
16. Is this your idea of a good Father?
17. What about the son? In the discussion, Greg made a strong point of being open-minded and willing to listen. Did he demonstrate this in his behavior as the Son? Why not?

You may want your students to re-do the role-play.

18. Can anyone here show us a better example of how a parent might approach his child? And a better example of how the child might respond?



film title: IVAN AND HIS FATHER

length: 13½ minutes

SYNOPSIS

The difficulty of change is the issue here. Ivan cannot communicate with his Father. When Ivan was quite young, he says, his Father stopped talking to him, except in cliches. Now Ivan responds in kind.

"What would you like to say to your Father, if you could?"

This question leads Ivan into a powerful role-play in which he struggles to break out of his shell.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

(Note: These suggestions are offered in the spirit of this whole series--if anything works for you, take it; if not, do it your own way. You know what's best.)



IVAN



KENT MACKENZIE



MIKE SOLOMON



MIKE



BARBARA



### INTRODUCING THE FILM:

People give lots of reasons for not talking to each other. "He's just a phony." "It would hurt him too much if I said what I feel." "It would break up our friendship." Such reasons may be valid, but often they cover up the person's own fears. This film will show such a situation.

You should be warned that the film affects some people very deeply - you may not feel like talking at all after you see it.

### AFTER THE FILM:

Students may find it hard to talk about their real response to this film.

It's probably best to let them find their own way for a while.

1. Any discussion?

Later, you may choose to guide the discussion more.

2. What do you think is going on here?

3. How does Ivan feel? How does his Father feel?
4. What do you think will happen next?
5. Mike Solomon accuses Ivan of being a phony. Do you think he is right?
6. Ivan says he holds back his real feelings because "it would destroy my Father." What do you think about that?
7. Mike Solomon, speaking Ivan's inner thoughts, says, "I'm not going to tell you the truth if it means a smack in the mouth." How much do you think physical fear of his Father affects Ivan? Does it affect you?



You may have to dig to get deeper.

8. Ivan refuses to touch his Father because "You kiss your Mom, you shake hands with your Dad." Do you believe this is his real reason? How do you feel about it?
9. How do you think you would feel, trying to talk to Ivan? To his Father?
10. Ivan says it is too late to change. Do you believe him?

These final questions - which are the most important - may be the most difficult for your students to confront:

11. What could Ivan do to change his relationship with his Father?
12. Would you like to change your relationship to your parents? What do you think you could do about it?



