

HELPFUL TIPS FOR PARENTS OF TEENAGERS

Parent and Teen Relationships¹

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The Center for Health at Harvard developed a series of philosophies they feel are necessary for parents to help teens make the transition to adulthood. Teens need close relationships with and support from their parents more than ever. The risks to teens today are many. There is violence in schools, our educational system is seen as inadequate, they are under increased pressure to succeed, and although the use of illicit drugs has declined in recent years, the abuse of prescription drugs has increased. According to a report by the Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health, [[Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action](#), 2001] parents should incorporate *five* concepts into their interactions with their teens:

Love and Connect

At a time when teens are trying to separate from their families and relationships with friends become more consuming, parents still need to find ways to connect with their teens. Showing appreciation for the person she is becoming, respecting her changing interests, and acknowledging her part in the family are some of the ways parents can show love and support.

Monitor and Observe

Teens have much on their plates. There are after school activities, relationships with friends, jobs, as well as their academic performance. Parents must learn to strike a balance, learning to monitor their teen's activities while providing room to grow. In the past, parents took a more active in their children's lives, and now, parents must learn to monitor by communication rather than physical presence. Parents can do this by developing relationships with their teen's friends and their parents, attending parent teacher conferences and paying attention to warning signs of possible trouble, such as poor school performance, weight loss or gain, changes in sleep patterns, or lack of motivation to be with friends or family.

Guide and Limit

Teens need parents to set limits, but still respect their need to find their own identities. Parents would benefit from setting house rules and expectations for schoolwork. While some rules must be non-negotiable, such as no drugs, no alcohol or other rules that are in place to insure a teen's safety, other rules can be more flexible, such as curfews or household chores, allowing for a teen to learn to negotiate and problem solving.

Model and Consult

Parents are the role models in their teen's life. It is important for them to set an example of how they want their teens to act. Their values and attitudes more often than not, shape the values and attitudes of their children. Parents can help teens to explore the world by discussing moral and social issues, letting their teen know and understand their viewpoints, as well as showing respect by listening to their teen's viewpoint. By having open discussions, teens will know their parents are available and open to discussion about the situations impacting their lives.

Provide and Advocate

Most parents accept their responsibility of providing food, shelter and clothing to their children. Most parents provide a safe environment for their children and teens in their home. However, as teens begin to explore the world outside of their home, parents can network to allow their teens access to other adults that will provide the guidance in their absence. This can include religious and community leaders as well as access to mentors or coaches in after-school activities. Parents can also stay involved in education, talking with teachers or counselors if they believe a problem might be developing. Teens will benefit from learning from experiences and relationships with a variety of adults.

For additional information and support, please contact:

StarVista (formerly YFES) Parent Support Line: 1-888-220-7575

Daly City Youth Health Center: (650) 985-7000 or (650) 985-7017

¹ Retrieved from: http://parentingteens.suite101.com/article.cfm/raising_teens