

High School Parents[®]

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Educational Service Unit #8
Linda Miller, Service Representative

still make the difference!



Take time mid-year to review progress, make adjustments

It's the start of a new year—and nearly the halfway point in this school year. So it's a good time to take stock and make any needed adjustments.

Talk with your teen about how the school year is going. Is she making the progress you both would like? How can she make the rest of the school year even better?

Then make some learning resolutions. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Review and update schedules.** Between school, activities and time with friends, is your child setting aside enough time to get her homework completed? Is she getting enough sleep?
- **Free up time** for other activities by reducing screen time. Challenge

your teen to keep track of all the time she spends watching TV, surfing the Internet and texting her friends. If she's like most teens, she's spending seven and a half hours on these activities *every day*. When parents set limits on media use, teens use about three hours fewer per day. One easy way to cut down on screen time is to put the cell phone recharging station away from her bedroom.

- **Spend more time reading.** Just one in four teens reports reading for pleasure. But the best way to build the vocabulary she'll need in college is to read widely.

Source: "Generation M²: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds," Kaiser Family Foundation, www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia012010nr.cfm.

Confidence can lead to school success



Teens who are confident often do better in school because they believe they can

accomplish goals and overcome problems. To help build your teen's self-esteem:

- **Praise accomplishments.** So your teen didn't get an A+ on that last math test—he got a B instead. That still means he mastered a good majority of the material! Mention how proud you are that his studying paid off—and that the mistakes he did make are great learning opportunities.
- **Ask about his goals.** Talk to your teen about his plans for the future. Work together to come up with ways he could achieve his goals.
- **Take pride in your teen.** Let him overhear you bragging about him and his accomplishments to relatives or neighbors. It will bring a smile to his face!

Source: "How Can I Improve My Self-Esteem?" TeensHealth from Nemours, http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/self_esteem.html.

Keep your teenager safe by keeping tabs on online activity



Your teen uses the Internet to do homework, visit social networking sites and just have fun. But do you know what else she's doing online?

It can be tough to get teens to open up and talk about their online activities. They may feel old enough to handle whatever strange things they find online. But it's vital that you keep tabs on your teen's Internet use and that you know what she's doing in cyberspace.

Here are signs that your teen may be at risk for online trouble:

- **She shuts off the monitor** as soon as you enter the room.
- **She spends lots of time** logged on, particularly at night. Kids who

spend a great deal of time online are more likely to fall victim to online predators.

- **She withdraws from the family.** Although some "pulling away" is normal, a total withdrawal isn't.

To keep your teen from getting into serious trouble online:

- **Talk to her** about Internet dangers.
- **Keep the family computer** in the living room or other common place, not in your child's bedroom.
- **Use filtering software** to prevent her from visiting sites that are inappropriate.
- **Limit computer usage**—especially if you feel her computer time is affecting her schoolwork.
- **Teach her never to give out** personal information online.

Eating a healthy breakfast can lead to higher test scores



Your teen studied for hours and has her pens and pencils packed. She's ready for her test today, right? Almost.

Studies show that another important test-prep step is often overlooked—eating breakfast.

Studies show that students who eat a good breakfast:

- **Are more alert** at school.
- **Perform better** in class and on tests.
- **Achieve higher scores** on standardized tests.
- **Behave better** in class.

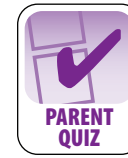
This doesn't mean you (or your teen) have to get up before dawn to make stacks of pancakes. An example breakfast would be an egg, a slice of whole wheat toast with nut butter, a piece of fruit and a glass of low-fat

milk. Other good breakfast choices include tofu, lean meat and whole grain cereals. Also ensure your teen stays well-hydrated—it's harder for a thirsty brain to process information.

But we all know teens' morning-time is precious—after all, growing adolescents need their sleep! So if your teen sleeps in and doesn't have time for a sit-down meal, be sure to have portable breakfast foods on hand, like a piece of fruit or a whole grain bagel. The little bit of brain-power it takes to nosh on breakfast will help her brain wake up and be ready for test-taking time.

Source: E. Payne, "Good nutrition boosts exam success," My High School Journalism, http://my.hsj.org/Schools/Newspaper/tabid/100/view/frontpage/schoolid/2049/articleid/440818/newspaperid/2035/Good_nutrition_boosts_exam_success.aspx.

How can you help your teen prepare for an oral report?



He has to give an oral report and he's nervous. Are you helping your teen prepare for oral presentations in class?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to start early? This is one case where procrastination can really hurt.
- ___ **2. Do you suggest** your teen look for an interesting story to open or close the oral report?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to practice? Practicing is one of the best ways to overcome nervousness. Practicing in front of a mirror can also help him critique his effort.
- ___ **4. Do you record the practice**, if possible? That way, your teen can listen to himself and make adjustments.
- ___ **5. Do you encourage** your teen to get a good night's sleep the night before the presentation?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen do his best on an important oral presentation for class. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Do you know how to support your teen during adolescence?



Your teen might not be able to explain why she's often moody—but science can. Your teenager's brain is growing as quickly now as it did during the first two years of her life. That partially explains why your teen will be laughing one minute and angry the next.

But this is an explanation—not an excuse. You can work with your teen to help meet her changing needs and keep her moods in check. What she needs from you is your:

- **Time.** Family time shows your teen that you care for her. She may claim she'll "die of embarrassment" if you're seen getting ice cream as a family, but deep down, she's thankful you're there.
- **Encouragement.** Believe it or not, teens want—and need—their

parents' approval. Mention that you are proud of your teen, and know that she is capable of success, both in and out of school.

- **Patience.** Teens are exploring a variety of different things—new looks, new interests and new ideas. They're attempting to expand their horizons and explore the world. Be patient with your teen, discuss her new interests and pick your battles.
- **Nurturing.** Physically, nurture your teen's growing body by making sure she knows how to make healthy food and exercise choices. Emotionally, remind your teen that you love her and are there for her when she needs you.

Source: M. Barone, "Living and Learning with Teens," Homefires, www.homefires.com/articles/living_with_teens.asp.

Choose reading materials that will entice your teenager to read



Books have a lot of competition for teens' attention—TV, the Internet, text messages, etc. So it's no surprise that a book needs to be *really* interesting to get a teen to focus on it. Encourage your teen to read by choosing reading materials:

- **Related to local,** national and international current events. Your teen may be more likely to read the newspaper than a book—and that's okay! Clip articles you think might interest him.
- **About a range of opportunities** and experiences. Teens want to explore the world—and there's no easier way to do that than through reading! Send your teen on a trip through the travel section of the

library. Or suggest that he pick up biographies about people in careers he finds interesting.

- **That deal with big issues.** Teens are learning to solve problems for themselves, rather than just running to you. Many young adult fiction books discuss issues similar to ones your teen may be dealing with, and can give him ideas for coping.
- **That connect him to you!** Read the same book as your teen and then discuss it. Or share your favorite book from when you were a teen, and talk about why it was so important to you.

Source: "Helping Teens Find Something to Read," Aurora Public Schools, Colorado, www.aps.k12.co.us/family/docs/parents_teens_reading.pdf.

Q: My teen is bored in one of her classes and her grades in that class are slipping into the danger zone. What can I do before things really get out of control?

Questions & Answers

A: Before starting on a plan of action, you need to have two talks—one with your teen and one with her teacher. Try to figure out what the problem areas are.

For instance, if your teen doesn't finish the assigned reading for the class, she is likely to be bored in the next day's discussion. Or if she spends her time chatting with her friends in the back of the room, she isn't going to be an active participant in a class debate.

On the other hand, it may be that the class is simply not challenging enough for her. Perhaps you need to think about a transfer to a different class, if possible.

While you're figuring out the problem, challenge your teen to use this as a learning experience. In her life, she's going to have to do some things that she doesn't find interesting. So learning how to make the most of those experiences is a valuable life lesson.

If she signed up for this class, there must have been something she thought she wanted to learn. Can she do enough reading outside of class to meet her personal learning goals?

Try an experiment: For a week, have her act as if she enjoyed the class. Would she sit in a different seat? Would she participate in class more frequently? See if making these changes can help transform her attitude.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Discipline

Three ways to shape your teen's behavior



By the time your teen reaches high school, you can't *control* her behavior. But you can *shape* it. How? By giving her cues and reinforcements that point her in the direction you want her to go.

Here are some ways to shape that behavior:

- **Selective ignoring.** Some parents call this “picking your battles,” and it grows out of the fact that you simply can't invest enough time and energy to address *every* minor thing your teen does. So save your energy for the big things—riding in a car with a driver who has been drinking, lying to you about where she's been and who she's been with. Ignore the ratty shirt she insists on wearing to school.
- **Use logical consequences**—but avoid saying “I told you so.” You pointed out several times that she needed to study for the science test. She ignored you and got a bad grade. You shouldn't ignore it, because talking through what happened is the best way to help the lesson sink in. Just ask what she would like to do differently next time.
- **Don't nag.** Teens tune out nagging. So develop a one- or two-word way to remind your teen of what you've asked. “Madelyn—homework,” or, “Trash, please.” Then back off.

Source: “10 Techniques to Shape Children's Behavior,” Ask Dr. Sears, www.askdrsears.com/topics/discipline-behavior/10-techniques-shape-childrens-behavior.

Is grounding an effective discipline technique for teens?

He walks in the door an hour after curfew. After you breathe a sigh of relief, you fall back on an old discipline tactic: “You're grounded.”

Does grounding work? Experts say it can. The fear of being grounded can be an effective way to encourage teens to follow family rules.

But if grounding is used too frequently, or inappropriately, it can drive a wedge between you and your teen. Here are some ways to make grounding work:

- **Establish rules** and consequences in advance. It's easier to invoke a consequence if your teen already knows it's coming.
- **Don't use grounding** as a punishment for everything. It's best to use logical consequences whenever you can. So if he's



out late at a party with friends, then grounding makes sense. If he gets in a fight with his sister, grounding isn't really connected to the problem.

- **Limit the time** your teen is grounded. The greater the time between when he broke the rule, the tougher it is for your teen to make a connection.

Source: W. Parker, “Effective Discipline Ideas for Teenagers: Grounding,” http://fatherhood.about.com/od/effectivediscipline/a/grounding_teens.htm.

Why parents should take teenage drinking seriously



You aren't completely clueless—you know that there are teenage parties where alcohol is served. The big question is: Should one of those places be at your house?

The answer is simple—*no*. Serving alcohol to teenagers is illegal in most places. But there's an even bigger reason. Teenage alcohol use is dangerous in the long- and the short-term.

The immediate problems you probably know about. Teens tend

to drink too much when they drink. Teens are the group most likely to have their stomachs pumped because they have drunk dangerous levels of alcohol.

But there are also long-term effects. Teens whose parents allow them to drink at home are more likely to develop alcohol problems in the future. On the other hand, teens who don't drink at home are less likely to drink anywhere.

Source: A. Robbins, *The Geeks Shall Inherit the Earth*, Hyperion Books.