

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Help your teen choose friends who will be a good influence

As children grow up, their friends begin to have a strong influence on them. And that's more than a little scary to parents.

However, you can worry less if your teen has found a group of "good" friends. Studies have shown that you have more of an effect on the kinds of friends your teen chooses than you may realize.

Teens are more likely to choose "good" friends (defined by one of the studies as "ones who don't fight and who have plans for college") if they have a warm relationship with their parents. In fact, teens close to their parents are less likely to fight and be delinquent, and more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities, to have higher grades and to have plans for college.

To improve your relationship with your teen:

- **Participate in activities together.** Finding shared interests gives you and your teen a great foundation for a close relationship.
- **Talk frequently**—especially about school. Knowing what is going on in your teenager's life will help him realize how important he is to you.
- **Express affection** for one another. Teens are looking for acceptance and approval. If your teen doesn't get it from you, he will look for it from someone else. Let your teen know that you love him and that you will always be there for him.

Source: Jeff Grabmeier, "Parents Can Help Teens Choose 'Good' Friends, Study Finds," <http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/adolfrnd.htm>.

Give your teen a destination, not a road map



When teens face tough problems, they often turn to their parents for advice. It's easy to

give your teen a road map: "First do this. Then do that." But she'll learn more if you take a different approach—giving her a destination, instead of a map.

So work with your teen on the problem. What is the destination she's trying to reach? Suppose she got a bad grade in a math class. Ask her what her goal is.

It may not be quite the goal you would have chosen. You'd like her to aim for an A. She says she'll be happy with a B. But once she has a destination clearly in her mind, you can help her think about how to "map" her route.

Does she need to do extra studying? Should she ask the teacher for some after-school help? As she creates her own road map, she'll also be learning important problem-solving skills.

Source: Jane Nelsen, Lynn Lott and H. Stephen Glenn, *Positive Discipline A-Z*, ISBN: 978-0-307-34557-8 (Three Rivers Press, 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com/crown/trp).

Encourage teens—especially boys—to read for enjoyment



Boys just don't read as much as girls. That's what the statistics show. They'll read their textbooks but they don't typically read for pleasure.

You can encourage boys to read for enjoyment if you:

- **Have a regular reading time** at your house. Turn off the TV and the computer. Have everyone settle in with a book or magazine.

- **Give the gift of reading.** Give a gift card to a bookstore and let your teen choose reading material.
- **Look for news stories.** Many boys prefer reading nonfiction. Share stories about interesting subjects.
- **Read yourself.** If a teenage boy sees adult men reading, he's more likely to pick up a book himself.

Source: Elizabeth Knowles, *Boys and Literacy: Practical Strategies for Librarians, Teachers, and Parents*, ISBN: 1-591-58212-1 (Libraries Unlimited, 1-800-225-5800, www.lu.com).

Use community service to teach your teen three critical lessons



Too often, teens get a bad rap. Adults criticize their dress, their music and their attitudes.

In fact, today's teens may be the most idealistic generation ever. Nearly 60 percent of teens do some sort of regular volunteer service. And many schools today require students to volunteer.

While teens are volunteering, they're also learning important lessons. Here are three big lessons that teens learn from their service:

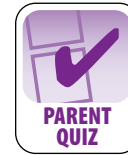
- 1. They can make a difference.** A teen who serves meals in a soup kitchen sees that her efforts matter to people who may otherwise go without food. A teen who volunteers in a children's hospital ward sees the faces of patients light up when she walks in. But teens can also learn this same lesson close to home. If an elderly neighbor needs help, have your teen volunteer to run errands and then spend time just listening.
- 2. There are things more important than things.** We live in a material world. Teens spend a lot of time worrying about whether they have

the right shoes or blue jeans or jackets. Volunteering helps put all that in perspective. When she sees a mom who took her kids out of an abusive home with only the clothes on their backs, she may worry less about having the "right" brand name on her own jeans.

- 3. They are generous.** Volunteering helps shape the way teens view themselves forever. Teens who learn to give now will keep giving throughout their lives.

Source: Kenneth R. Ginsburg, Martha Jablow & Marilee Jones, *Less Stress, More Success*, ISBN: 1-581-10230-5 (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1-866-843-2271, www.aap.org).

Are you helping your teen handle stress, pressure?



Nobody ever said the teen years would be easy. But today's teens face unique pressures. Teens say that the pressure to do well in school, schedules that are too crammed and worries about what they'll do after high school all stress them out.

You can't take away that stress. But you can help your teen learn to live with it. How are you helping your teen handle stress? Answer *yes* or *no* to the statements below to find out:

- 1. I talk with my teen** about his problems when he is stressed. Once we figure out the cause of the stress, we can make a plan to deal with it.
- 2. I help my teen** avoid feeling helpless. When he's stressed out, we try to find at least one thing he can do right then to attack the problem.
- 3. I encourage my teen** to get enough sleep.
- 4. I make sure my teen** eats healthy food. Too much caffeine isn't good for anyone!
- 5. I encourage my teen** to do something he enjoys each day.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your teen deal with stress. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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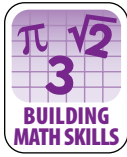
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Teach money management to improve your teen's math skills



A recent study showed that 62% of teenagers believe they're prepared to deal with the adult financial world after high school. It's great that today's teens are so confident about their money managing skills. But does your teen really know enough to survive in the real world?

The surveyed teens were less confident when it came to specific money management areas. Here are the facts—and ways you can teach your teen about these important areas (and improve his math skills along the way!):

- **57% of teens** knew how to compare prices for the best deal. Teach your teen how to figure out the best deal in the supermarket. Which is a better deal—the 16-ounce can of soup or the 36-ounce

can? Or use a calculator at home to find the best deals in catalogs or advertisements.

- **41% of teens** said they knew how to budget money. Work with your teen to develop his own weekly budget. Include categories for spending, such as lunch money or clothes, and also set aside some money in a savings account. Show him how you make your budget.
- **Only 26% of teens** understood how credit card interest and fees worked. Use a real-life example to explain this. "If you buy a \$50 jacket on your credit card now, can't pay the bill this month, and have a 20% interest rate, how much will the jacket really cost you?"

Source: "Charles Schwab Teens and Money 2007 Survey Findings: Insights into Money Attitudes, Behaviors and Concerns of Teens," Charles Schwab, www.aboutschwab.com/teensurvey2007.pdf.

Set limits on the amount of time your teen spends watching TV



American children and adolescents spend 22 to 28 hours per week watching TV. That's three to four hours per day!

Studies have linked long amounts of television viewing to poor grades (as it replaces study time) and also poor health (as it replaces exercise).

Here's how you can set limits on how much TV your teen can watch:

- **Make it equal.** Tell your teen that she can watch TV for the same amount of time that she spends studying. So if she spends two hours on homework, she can watch two hours of TV.
- **Give alternatives to TV.** Keep lots of reading material around the house. Offer to take a walk with

your teen. Or keep exercise videos near the TV—she'll be watching TV if she uses them, but at least she will get a little exercise, too.

- **Turn TV time into family time.** Watch a movie or show (of her choice) together, and then discuss it. Ask questions that test her comprehension skills—she'll need to use those skills on standardized tests, as well.

Source: Elizabeth Palmer, "Too Much TV? Setting limits on television viewing," <http://childrentoday.com/resources/articles/settvlimits.htm>.

"There is always a moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."

—Graham Greene

Q: Nearly every day, my ninth grader and I have the same fight. She wants to wear outfits that are just unacceptable. Between the low-waisted jeans and the skimpy tops, she's showing more skin than I've seen on some beaches! How can I get her to wear more appropriate clothes to school?

Questions & Answers

A: There's nothing like a good wardrobe fight to get your day off to a rotten start. Of course, teens and parents have disagreed over clothing forever. But today's clothing choices do offer particular challenges. She may not be aware of exactly the messages that too-skimpy clothing can send.

Check the school dress code. Many spell out what is and isn't acceptable. Talk about your own values and explain why some of the clothes she wants to wear don't fit.

The key when you are enforcing your house rules is to stay calm. Don't get into an argument. Don't raise your voice or insult her taste.

Talk about your own values and explain why some of the clothes she wants to wear don't fit.

Instead, look for compromises you can both live with. She can wear the skimpy top if she layers a cute T-shirt underneath. She can wear the low-cut jeans if she wears a shirt that's long enough to cover all skin.

Your daughter is just doing her job—she's trying to figure out her identity. In a few years, you'll look at pictures and say, "Can you believe people wore that?"

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Motivating Your Child

Don't let your teen become a school dropout



The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network recently conducted a study that found 25 major risk

factors that contribute to students' decisions to drop out of school. These risk factors included:

- Poor attendance.
- Low educational expectations.
- Lack of effort.
- Low commitment to school.
- Low parent contact with school.
- Lack of discussion about school at home.

However, you can help your teen combat these risk factors—and motivate him to stay in school!

Here's how:

- **Expect your teen** to attend school—every single day. Teens who miss school often drop out if they think they can't catch up.
- **Expect your teen** to do his best so he will be motivated to work hard.
- **Let him know** that you believe in him—and that you know he'll succeed at whatever he tries.
- **Encourage your teen** to become involved in an extracurricular activity. Teens with ties to the school beyond academics are more likely to stay in school.
- **Work as a team** with your teen's teachers. You all want the best for him.
- **Talk about school** at home—every day.

Source: "Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs," National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/major_reports/communities_in_schools.htm.

Set high, realistic expectations to motivate your teenager

The secret to motivating your teen to do well in school is surprisingly not promising material rewards. It's setting high but realistic expectations for her.

So what are "high but realistic" expectations? Well, a high, unrealistic expectation might be expecting a teen with an interest in chemistry to find a cure for cancer—by the end of next year. A low, realistic expectation would be to expect the same teen to attend all of her chemistry classes this week—classes she already plans to attend.

The high but realistic expectation would be to expect her to increase her chemistry grade by one letter grade this grading period—something that shows you



believe in her, and something that she also feels capable of achieving.

Whether they show it or not, teens do want to meet their parents' expectations. Your teen is likely to strive for success if your expectations are realistic.

Motivate your teen with a time capsule linking school to future



"Why do I need to know this?" Most teens ask that question. Your answer—"You need it for college and for a job"—doesn't always sink in.

A time capsule can make your teen's goals clearer. Tell her to write a letter to herself, to be opened the day after she graduates from high school. The letter should spell out her goals and dreams.

It might start like this: "Dear [name of teen]: I am writing this letter to myself in the [grade level] grade."

In the letter, your teen should complete the following statements:

- **By the time I graduate** from high school, I want to be known as the student who
- **After high school**, I hope to
- **To get there**, I am going to have to study
- **In high school**, I'll have to do well in

Keep your teen focused on careers. (No "I want to be Homecoming Queen.") Put the letter in a safe place (your sock drawer works). Just the act of writing it will help your teen focus on why she needs to study and focus on school.

Source: Elizabeth Wissner-Gross, *What High Schools Don't Tell You*, ISBN: 978-1-59463-037-8 (Hudson Street Group, 1-800-788-6262, www.penguinroup.com).