

10 Principles for Parenting Your Teen

- Healthy Teen Development



1

Remember, parents matter. Make a difference in the life of your teen by providing guidance and support. At times, it may seem like your teen does not want you around. However, your child really does need you and needs to know you care.

2

Stay warm and close. It's impossible to love your teen too much. Spoil your teen with love and support every day. Spend time together at meals, and remember to say, "I love you."

3

Stay involved with your teen's life. Ask questions about schoolwork and friends, and attend your teen's extracurricular activities. Teens need to know you are interested in them just as much now as you were when they were younger.

4

Set limits and provide structure. Clearly communicate your expectations to your teen. Rules and expectations should change throughout your child's life, but children of all ages need clear rules.

5

Enforce rules and consequences. Let your teen know what the consequences of breaking rules will be ahead of time. Follow through on enforcing punishments.

6

Be consistent. Parents should discuss and agree on basic parenting principles for guiding their children. Then, be consistent each day and in every situation. Mixed messages from parents can lead to frustration for both parents and children. Children need consistency to help them structure their lives.

7

Explain yourself and engage your teen in decisions and conversations. Discuss the reasons for rules and consequences with your teen. This does not mean that the rules or consequences will change, but it will help your teen understand your reasons and respect you. Teens don't respect authority when it seems arbitrary.

8

Don't use harsh discipline. Harsh discipline, like yelling or slapping, is not an effective long-term approach to discipline. Do not discipline your teen when you are angry. Instead, make arrangements to talk to your teen at a later time when wisdom and good judgment, not anger, will guide your discipline choices.

9

Treat your teen with respect. Your teen is growing up. Acknowledge your teen's increasing independence and ability to make decisions. Guide your teen in making positive choices, but realize that he or she will make mistakes.

10

Understand adolescence is a period of change—for parents and children. As a parent, you are changing as you develop new information and skills to help guide your teen. Your teen is changing physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Look for resources to help you understand the changes your teen is going through. Such resources include your local Cooperative Extension office, other parents of teens, and books. Remember, your relationship with your teen is changing, not ending.

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Additional Resources

Steinberg, Laurence and Ann Levine. *You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10 to 20*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1997.

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