

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Have a meaningful discussion about your teen's report card

It can be difficult to get teens to open up—especially when it comes to school-related subjects. But with the right attitude, you can have a meaningful discussion with your teen about his report card—no matter what his grades are. Be sure to:

- **Stay calm.** Studies show that a parent's bad reaction can lead to worse grades in the future. If you're having trouble keeping your cool, say, "Let's talk about this after dinner."
- **Have realistic expectations.** Some parents believe that anything less than all A's is a "bad report card." Yet even the most gifted students will not necessarily do well in every subject.

- **Ask questions.** Rather than lecturing your teen about his grades, let him talk. "How do you feel about these grades?" "Were you surprised by your English grade?" "What is your goal for your next report card?"
- **Use positive reinforcement.** Shocked that your teen brought his D up to a B in geometry? Hide your surprise and say "I knew you had it in you!" Disappointed in a grade? Ask, "What did you learn that will help you raise that grade?"
- **Ask what you can do.** Do you need to enforce a regular study time?

Source: C. Moorman and T. Haller, "Ten Rules for Talking to Your Children about Grades," StorkNet, www.storknet.com/cubbies/parenting/talking-about-grades.htm.

Get involved to ensure your teen's success



As a parent of a high schooler, you have probably wondered how to stay involved in her education.

With homework you may not understand and a teen who may not want you around at school, it can be challenging to remain involved. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try!

Your involvement in your teen's education is just as important now as it was in elementary school. You can:

- **Make sure your teen has a regular time for studying.** Then find quiet work of your own to do while she's working. She'll sense your support even if you can't help with specific subjects.
- **Promote good attendance.** Falling behind by even a day can be costly, so make sure your teen attends every day. Talk about the importance of school regularly.
- **Get involved with a school activity, like the parent-teacher group.** If you'd like to get involved but aren't sure where to start, just call the school and ask!

It's time to start thinking about your teen's life after high school



Graduation is right around the corner. Your teen might be planning to head to a four-year university—and that's

great! But what if your teen isn't able to attend a university right after high school?

Your teen could:

- **Get a job.** If your teen already has a part-time job, he could speak to his employer about transitioning to a full-time position. If not, your teen should do his best to look for a job that will provide for him in the future. He should think about what his ideal salary would be, what benefits he'd like the job to have and whether the job has advancement opportunities. Encourage him to prepare a résumé to discuss with his guidance counselor.
- **Learn a trade.** If your teen is interested in a particular trade,

such as construction or technology, he should focus on a job that will help him get the certificates or licenses he'll need to succeed in that trade.

- **Attend community college.** If your teen isn't sure what path he'd like to pursue at a four-year university, he might take a few classes at the local community college. Once he figures out what he'd like to focus on, he can get his associate's degree or transfer credits to a four-year university.

Source: R. S. Hansen, Ph.D., "Next Step After High School? Some Alternatives to College," *Quintessential Careers*, www.quintcareers.com/college_alternatives.html.

"Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you."

—Robert Fulghum

Studies challenge commonly held beliefs about studying



Today, research can help answer three key questions. It can tell students where, what and when to study.

1. **Where is the best place to study?** Most students have a single favorite study spot. But research shows that may not be the most effective for learning. Researchers gave college students a list of vocabulary words. Half the students memorized the words while sitting in a single spot on each of two days. The other half studied in a different room each day. The second group did far better.

2. **What should you study?** Most students tend to concentrate on one thing—vocabulary today, verb forms tomorrow. However, it actually helps to mix things up. This variety seems to leave a deeper impression on the brain.

3. **When's the best time to study?** Brain research says that students remember more if their studying is spaced out. That will give students a better result, without spending any more total time studying.

Source: B. Carey, "Forget What You Know About Good Study Habits," *New York Times*, September 6, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/health/views/07mind.html?_r=2.

Are you helping your teen learn to manage anger?



Teachers say that they're facing a new problem—teens who completely lose their tempers. Are you helping your teen

manage anger? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

___ 1. **Does your teen know** that although everyone feels anger some times, there are ways to express anger that are unacceptable?

___ 2. **Does your teen know** that you are available to talk when she is feeling angry? Talking about her feelings can help her control them.

___ 3. **Does your teen know** a few techniques (taking deep breaths, counting to 10) to use when she feels herself getting angry?

___ 4. **Do you encourage** your teen to get exercise every day? It not only makes her body strong, but it also helps her handle stress.

___ 5. **Are you a good role model** by handling anger appropriately?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen learn to control anger. For each *no* answer, try those ideas.

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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kris Amundson & Jennifer McGovern.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Studies show that your teen can become happier with kindness



Research shows that people who are actively kind to others actually score higher on measures of happiness than people who don't go out of their way to be kind. And happier people are found to be more motivated in general—which will help your teen in school.

To instill a sense of kindness in your teen, encourage him to be:

- **Compassionate.** Kind people feel for others, even when they are not directly affected by a situation. Your teen can do this by putting himself in others' shoes.
- **Grateful.** Kind people thank others. Your teen should also use his manners regularly.
- **Considerate.** Kind people think of others' feelings, needs and wants.

If your teen is getting a snack, he should ask if you'd like one, too.

- **Forgiving.** Kind people realize that holding a grudge isn't effective. Your teen will be happier if he isn't dwelling on the past.

Remind your teen:

- **Not to be mean or cruel.** Suggest that he think before he speaks about others.
- **Not to be insensitive.** If a classmate says, "My binder broke!" your teen's reply should *not* be, "And?" He should take the feelings of others into consideration.

Source: K. Otake and others, "Happy People Become Happier Through Kindness: A Counting Kindnesses Intervention," National Center for Biotechnology Information, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1820947/; "A Person of Character—Respect," Character Counts! www.charactercounts.org/pdf/PersonOfCharacter-handout-0703.pdf.

Promote responsibility with clear expectations & consequences



Your responsibility as a parent is to clearly share your expectations with your teen. Your teen's responsibility is to live up to those expectations.

Your teen is much more likely to remember and follow rules if she plays a role in setting them. Consider these areas of your teen's life:

- **Homework.** Perhaps you agree that your teen can decide when she wants to do her homework. Her part of the deal is to complete her homework. If she doesn't finish her assignments, she'll have to take the bad grade and deal with the consequences.
- **Chores.** Maybe you agree that she needs to do the laundry before she can borrow the car on Saturday

nights. If those towels aren't stacked and folded, the car keys stay in your possession.

- **Social events.** Say you agree that she can spend the night at a friend's house after a party. Her part of the deal is that she must call you when she gets there. If she doesn't call, you both agree she will have to come home early from the next party.

Having clear expectations means that your teen knows the house rules and the consequences she will face if she breaks them. And your teen will have no one to blame for a poor decision, but herself.

Source: Anthony E. Wolf, Ph.D., *Get Out Of My Life, but First Could You Drive Me & Cheryl to the Mall: A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager*, ISBN: 0374528535, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Q: My daughter made the cheer-leading squad this year and she feels "popular" for the first time. But at home, she's turned into someone I hardly know. She hardly wants to say anything to me. She constantly pressures me to buy clothes we can't afford. And she never wants to spend time with our family. How can we compete with the *cool kids*?

Questions & Answers

A: Peer pressure comes in many forms. Sometimes, it's a group of teens trying to encourage illegal behavior. But sometimes, as in the case of your child, it's just a group of girls insisting that everyone conform to their standards.

Right now, it may feel good for your daughter to have this group of friends. But over time, teens eventually regret acting in ways that go against their values.

What can you do?

- **Work hard** to create a space of at least 10 or 15 minutes a day when the two of you can talk. If she's rushing off to games and practice, this can be hard!
- **Set some boundaries.** If your family has always set aside one night for family time, don't give that up. You may have to move the day, but keep the tradition.
- **Set limits** on her clothing budget. You might give her the total amount and let her make the choices about how to spend it. Help her learn the difference between *needs* and *wants*.
- **Be supportive.** Being a teen is hard. Let her know that no matter what, she can always rely on your love and support.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Motivation

Research shows importance of a 'success mindset'



The band director handed out a difficult new piece. But your teen isn't worried. "I'll just practice until I get it."

Then later, his math teacher introduced a new math skill. He rolled his eyes. "I can't learn this," he said. "I'm no good in math."

The truth is that the same skills your teen learns to master his music are the ones he can use to learn the difficult math problems. Only many students do not see the connection between practice and results in the classroom.

Researchers at Stanford have learned a powerful lesson about motivation. They divided students into two groups. They praised one group for their *ability* ("You must be smart to get that right"). They praised the other group for their *effort* ("You really worked hard to figure that out").

Over time, students in the group praised for their ability backed off a challenge. But the teens praised for their work effort said, "Bring it on."

How do you see school success? Do you believe your teen can learn anything if he works at it? That is what researchers now call the "success mindset." It's critical to helping students stay motivated to face—and overcome—challenges.

Thomas Edison once said, "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Turns out that he was exactly right!

Source: Bryan Goodwin, *Changing the Odds for Student Success: What Matters Most*, Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, McREL, www.changetheodds.org.

Make distant rewards seem closer for your high schooler

You know you need to lose weight. But the dessert looks so good. Do you eat it?

If the answer is yes, then you know that a distant reward—looking better six months from now—may not be enough to keep you from eating the cake. The same thing is true for teens.

It's hard to stay focused on learning things that they may not need to know or use for many years. But here is one way to make those distant rewards seem a little closer.

Help your teen earn college credit. Does your school offer dual-enrollment classes with a nearby community college? Can she take Advanced Placement classes? She can earn college credit while in



high school. (And that will save you tuition money in the future.)

Now is the time to talk with the guidance counselor. Juniors and seniors should ask about whether they can sign up for at least one college credit class.

Source: J. P. Allen & C. W. Allen, "Escaping the High School 'Twilight Zone,'" *Education Week*, March 3, 2010, Editorial Projects in Education.

Three ways to make sure your praise is a powerful motivator



Praise can be a powerful motivator. That's especially true for teens with low self-esteem, or who struggle in school.

But as with so many other good things, praise can be overdone. Here are three ways to make praise more effective:

- 1. Tie it to specific actions.** "You rewrote that essay taking into account the comments your teacher offered. It reads so much better now—and I am really proud of the fine work you did."
- 2. Do it in private.** A quiet word while the two of you are in the

car will mean more to your teen than a public, "Isn't my kid great?" Don't worry—your teen will find a way to let others know what you've said!

- 3. Focus your teen's attention** on his own good feelings. The most important part of praise is helping your teen recognize this feeling when he does a good job. So make statements that help him do that: "How did it feel to turn in a paper you knew had improved so much?"

Source: Richard Lavoie, *The Motivation Breakthrough: 6 Secrets to Turning On the Tuned-Out Child*, ISBN: 9780-7432-8961-0, Touchstone Books, a division of Simon & Schuster.