

Parenting teens

Polish your teen parenting skills



Parents of teens often feel they are building a relationship with an entirely new person, and in some ways, they are. Parents can begin to see glimpses of the adult their child will be, wrapped up in the little kid they know and love. Sometimes the emerging adult is a very different person.

Teenagers are at a stage in development where they are becoming more self-sufficient and private. The parenting role changes as teens move toward greater independence. They may no longer share with their parents the details of their lives. The influence of friends becomes stronger.

Teens begin to break away from traditional family activities in favor of spending time alone or with friends. During this important shift, teens learn the skills they need to lead independent, adult lives. However, the transition can be very difficult for both parents and adolescents.

Sometimes parents feel their children are slipping away from them. They may react by exerting tighter control – control that their teens often dislike. Anger may make teens communicate even less with parents, which makes parents crave more control. It can become a spiral of conflict.

Parenting an adolescent requires patience, love, and a sense of humor, just like parenting a young child.



What parents can do

- ♥ Realize that your teen's need for independence is normal. It is not a rejection of the parent or family.
- ♥ Broaden your protective boundaries. Don't give up your parental role, but allow your teen room to grow.
- ♥ Understand that in emotional situations, teens are less likely to make good decisions. Their brains do not work like adult brains and you cannot expect them to.
- ♥ Keep the lines of communication open, even if it seems to be one way. Your child is listening, and he or she still needs your guidance and reassurance.
- ♥ Try to put yourself in your teen's shoes. Respond to your teenager as you would an adult friend – just like you wanted to be treated when you were a teen.
- ♥ Work together. You still need rules for curfews, chores, homework, driving privileges, etc. Show your teen you care about and understand his or her feelings by working together to create a set of rules.
- ♥ Allow your teen to take responsibility and make choices, and when he or she handles it well, pay compliments and offer more opportunities to grow.
- ♥ Reinforce support. Remind your teen often that you are available and willing to discuss problems. Don't force it, but be clear in offering to help make decisions or handle difficult situations.