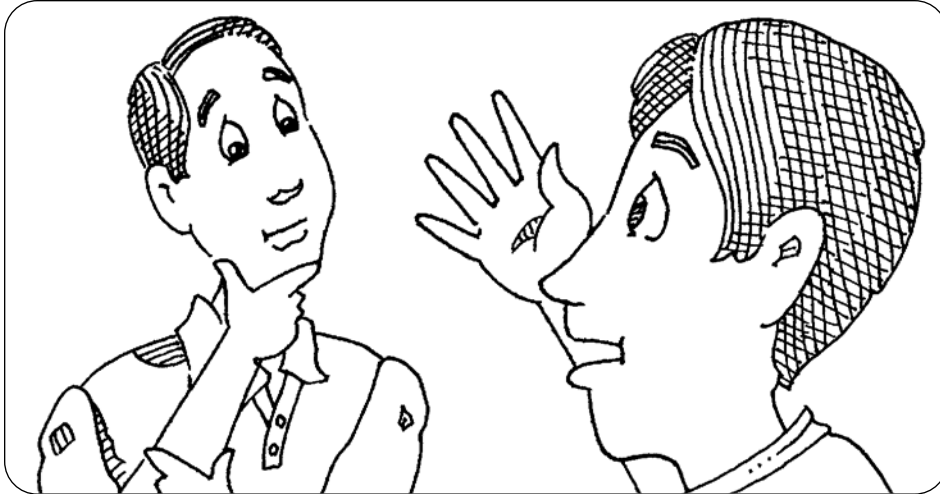


High School Parents[®]

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Kern County Supt. of Schools Office
Daryl Thiesen, Title IV/TUPE Coord.

still make the difference!



Really listen when you ask your teenager about school

A strong relationship with your teen begins with good communication. Yet many teens hesitate to bring problems or concerns to their parents. When teens do decide to talk to their parents, parents often respond one of two ways—they either *over-listen* or *under-listen*.

When you:

1. **Over-listen**, you're paying attention—to your own reactions. Before your teen even gets the whole problem out of his mouth, you're jumping to the rescue with solutions and ideas. Or you're questioning every bit of his story without letting him finish.
2. **Under-listen**, you're discounting what your teen has to say. Instead of your undivided attention, your teen is getting the bit of your attention left over after you pay

the bills, set the table and start to cook dinner.

After a while, your teen is likely to stop offering information. Or he may start picking fights, claiming you "never listen" and "don't really know him at all."

Either way, you're not *really* listening to your teen. If you're an over-listener, take a step back. Let your teen finish a story. You may find out that he wasn't asking for advice after all—he was telling you about how he solved a problem on his own.

If you're an under-listener, take a step forward. All those other tasks can wait five minutes while you focus on your teen. And the five minutes you spent with your teen will show him that you think he's important and you care about his opinions.

Tell your teen to 'listen smart' with earphones



Your teen is getting ready to study. So she gets out her music player, puts the earphones in her ears and cranks up the volume.

She may not know it, but she could be causing irreparable damage to her hearing. That's the result of a recent study at Children's Hospital Boston. Most teens don't even realize how loud their music is. Boys tend to turn up the volume more than girls, according to the study. "You can listen loud," says Dr. Brian Fligor, author of the study, "but you have to listen smart."

To protect your teen's hearing:

- **Watch the volume.** Don't let her listen at a volume of 80 percent of capacity for more than 90 minutes a day.
- **Give it a rest.** Get your teen in the habit of resting her ears between listening sessions.
- **Be sure the earphones or earbuds fit.** That can help filter out background noise so the volume can remain lower.

Source: Brian Fligor, Children's Hospital Boston, "Study examines teen beliefs and behaviors around iPod use, risk for hearing loss," www.childrenshospital.org/newsroom/Site1339/mainpageS1339P1sublevel511.html.

Create an educational ‘trust fund’ for your high schooler



There are a few lucky parents who can set up a *financial* trust fund for their children. But any parent can create an *educational* “trust fund.”

Your “deposits” are the ways you build up your teen’s confidence and motivation. They give your teen the tools to do the work necessary for school success.

What are the elements of an educational “trust fund”? Your teen needs the motivation that comes from:

- **Knowing you have confidence** in her. Perhaps the most important message you can give your teen is this: “No matter what, I will never give up on you.”
- **Answering the question**, “Why do we have to learn this anyway?” Give your teen a chance to see how the things she learns in

school will be useful later in life. Let her visit with someone in a job she would like to prepare for. When she sees that science and math classes open the door to many careers, she may be more willing to stick with them.

- **Asking for help.** Studies show that asking for help is the first step in overcoming barriers to learning. So encourage your teen to ask her teacher for help when she doesn’t understand.

Source: Barbara Bartholomew, “Sustaining the Fire,” *Educational Leadership*, March 2008 (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, www.ascd.org).

“It’s not what is poured into a student that counts, but what is planted.”

—Linda Conway

Talk to your high schooler about the dangers of drinking alcohol



“I just had one beer,” your teen tells you after you find out there was alcohol at the party. “There’s nothing wrong with drinking one beer.”

Actually, there is. A study in Australia followed teenagers for more than 10 years. The study found that even low-level drinking during the teenage years increased risks later on.

For boys, the research was clear. The more boys drank in their teen years, the more likely they were to develop alcohol-related problems as young adults. For girls, the link was not quite as strong. However, the

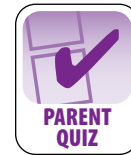
study concluded that there was no “safe” level of alcohol for either boys or girls during their teen years.

The lead researcher, Elya Moore, summed up the findings this way: “We found no evidence of a level [of drinking during the teen years] that may have been safe. I think that’s the most remarkable finding.”

Use this study as a springboard for a serious discussion with your teen about drinking.

Source: Elya Moore, Carolyn Coffey, John B. Carlin, Rosa Alati and George C. Patton, “Assessing alcohol guidelines in teenagers: results from a 10-year prospective study,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, April 7, 2009 (Wiley InterScience, www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117969397/home).

Are you helping your struggling high schooler?



About this time of the school year, some teens find themselves struggling in one class—or in several. Are you doing all you can to help your struggling teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about his progress in school and listened to his concerns?

___ **2. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk to his teachers about getting extra help?

___ **3. Have you met** with your teen’s teachers to develop a plan to get him back on track?

___ **4. Are you working** to get your teen study support through a school-based program or tutor?

___ **5. Have you helped** your teen develop study skills—setting a regular study time, establishing daily and long-term study goals, learning how to take good notes?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are doing what it takes to get your struggling teen back on track. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea.

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Teens develop important social, technical skills on the Internet



Teens spend a lot of time on the computer. They chat with friends, look at Facebook and check email. But is all this online activity good for your teen? Whatever happened to hanging out with friends in person?

The results from a recent study on teens and the Internet might shock you: Teens are developing important social and technical skills online.

It's easy to see the "technical skills." Your teen is probably the most computer-savvy member of your family—and by far the fastest typer. But the "social skills" are harder for many parents to understand.

Teens' "social networks" are vastly different from years ago. Friendships used to be defined by location (whoever lived nearby was a good

candidate for friendship) and privacy (reading a diary was the worst breach of trust that could be committed).

Now, thanks to the Internet, teens are friends with kids from around the world—and are broadcasting their secrets to anyone who wants to read them. In fact, learning how to manage the visibility of what they post online is one of the most important social skills today's teens have.

That said, it's still important to monitor your teen's computer usage—both the time spent online and the websites viewed. And as always, make sure schoolwork comes first.

Source: "New Study Shows Time Spent Online Important for Teen Development," The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, www.macfound.org/site/c.1kLXJ8MQKrH/b.4773437/k.3CE6/New_Study_Shows_Time_Spent_Online_Important_for_Teen_Development.htm.

Keep your high schooler on a schedule over the winter break



It's winter break. Your teen is looking forward to at least a week off from school. He's thinking about sleeping late, staying up late and generally doing nothing.

However, both you and his teachers are thinking a little bit further ahead—midterms are usually scheduled in January. And spring is fast approaching—which means college application deadlines are closing in.

Support your teen's school by keeping him on a schedule over the holiday. Encourage your teen to:

- **Work.** Ask him to do a little bit of schoolwork or reading every day. He likely has homework he should

be doing, but if not, it will benefit him to pick up a book.

- **Wake up.** Don't let him sleep in more than an hour past his normal wake-up time. He'll be less groggy in those early-morning classes when school begins again—for which both he and his teachers will thank you.
- **Write.** Enlist your teen in writing and addressing holiday cards or thank-you notes. He might even consider writing holiday cards to his teachers thanking them for their help so far this year.
- **Create.** Keep your teen's mind going. Ask him to help you in the kitchen—that's a great place to practice science and math.

Q: My daughter's worrying has *me* worried. Before every test, she's sure she will fail. As a result, she does worse than she would if she could relax. She worries about being popular. So she goes overboard. On her last group project, she did the work of four people. She is a good student and a nice kid. How can I help her worry a little less?

Questions & Answers

A: The teen years can be tough. But your teen is making things harder than they need to be. Because she's always worrying about the future, she's not able to enjoy the present.

Here's how you can help:

- **Help your teen** develop a sense of proportion. For example, not everything has to be perfect. There are times when "good enough" really is just that.
- **Set some limits** on how your teen studies. Tell her that getting a good night's sleep will lead to a better test score than cramming all night. Then set—and enforce—a curfew.
- **Help your teen avoid** taking on too much responsibility the next time a group project rolls around. Agree to play the "heavy" so she can say, "My mom says I have to help her this weekend. Sorry—I can't do that part of the project."
- **Pay close attention.** While your teen is learning to handle her anxiety, you need to be aware of another potential danger. Anxious teens sometimes "self-medicate" with alcohol or marijuana. So be on the alert for signs that she is using drugs or alcohol.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Building Character

Start small to teach your teen responsibility



Some teens do what they're told only because they are afraid they will lose a privilege if they don't. Responsible

teens, on the other hand, do something because it's their job to do it. They know their actions matter.

If your teen falls into the first category, don't worry—it's not too late to teach her about responsibility. Start small and encourage responsibility by giving your teen:

- **A curfew.** Talk to your teen about the curfew you've set, and the consequences of missing it. Stop yourself from calling your teen 10 minutes before curfew with a reminder—trust her to stick to it. And enforce the consequences if she is late.
- **A house key.** Having a key isn't a right—it's a responsibility. Discuss the importance of locking the door. Talk about the dangers of losing a key or lending it to a friend. Make sure she understands that responsibility for a small house key is a big deal. Remind your teen that if she is able to show responsibility in these areas, you know she's mature enough for larger responsibilities.

Responsibilities like these also build integrity and a strong work ethic—two characteristics that will help your teen succeed in school—and throughout life.

Source: Rose Halas, M.D., F.A.A.P., "Teens' personal responsibility: Rather than inundate your teen with a large dose of duty all at once, feed responsibility to her in bite-size pieces," *Essortment.com*, www.essortment.com/family/teenspersonalr_sglo.htm.

Encourage your high schooler to volunteer in your home town

Teens tend to think that the whole world is focused on them—that "everyone" is looking at that huge zit or "everyone" will laugh if they fail the driver's test.

Help your teen think about the needs of others by encouraging her to volunteer in your community. She could volunteer at:

- **A local camp.** Any camp could use an extra pair of hands.
- **The local humane society.** Many need volunteers to help "socialize" rescued animals.
- **The local library.** A volunteer can help put books back on the shelves, among other duties.

Teens who give back to their communities often have higher self-esteem and are more courteous to others. They also gain valuable work



experience—which will look great on a résumé or college application. If your teen isn't sure where to volunteer her time, encourage her to talk to her guidance counselor.

Source: Rachel Paxton, "Building Teen Character: Volunteering for Community Service," *SelfGrowth.com*, www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Paxton1.html.

Help your teen make the right decision in a difficult moment



Sometimes, it's easy to "do the right thing." If everyone is driving safely down a road, there's less temptation

for someone to speed.

But there are other, harder times when it's not so easy to do the right thing. The teacher leaves the room for just a second during a test. Does your teen text the answer to a question to his friend across the room?

It's those hard times when it's even more important for your teen to be prepared to do the right thing. Sometimes, these may seem like small choices. Should he get up

when the alarm clock beeps or roll over and miss first period? But even these choices have very big consequences. If he misses class today, it will be that much harder to catch up tomorrow.

Talk with your teen about these "hard moments." Let him know that everyone has to make choices. Often, by taking the choice that seems harder at the time (getting up and going to school), he will actually have an easier time in the future.

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, ISBN: 0-684-85609-3 (Fireside Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, www.simonsays.com).