

# Parenting a Teenager

*Imagine facing the dynamics of parent-teen relations with knowledge and confidence.*

The teen years  
come with many  
challenges, but also  
**GREAT  
OPPORTUNITIES.**

Adolescence can be a difficult time for both the teens and parents. Hormones and the ever-changing world can leave a teen feeling isolated and that no one understands them, especially their parents. Consequently, your teenager may become angry or confused while facing complicated issues about their identity, peers, sexual behavior, drinking and drug use.

Parents also face challenges during these years. Suddenly a child who once responded well to parental authority no longer seems to care. Disciplinary methods that worked previously are no longer effective. Parents may feel frightened or helpless about their teen's choices, leaving the family unit poised for potential problems.

## PARENT-TEEN CONFLICT

Challenges will arise in any parent-teen relationship, and some conflict is normal. Conflict may arise over issues like disapproval of their friends, balancing friends and family time, dating and sex. Other potential hotspots include their academic performance, frustrations over curfew or driving privileges, and money issues. Teens also may use these years to experiment with hair, clothing, drinking, smoking, or drug use.

## ADOLESCENT WARNING SIGNS

While some conflict is typical, if your child is involved in any of the following, it's time to seek additional help.

- Violent behavior
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Risky sexual behavior
- Unexplained school absences
- Depression or anxiety

## ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Enforce positive attention** - While your teen might not be interested in bonding, it's important to keep trying. Regular family meals are a great way to bridge the parent-teen gap. Spend undistracted time with your teen. Listen to their thoughts and respect their emotions. It's important to recognize positive actions, instead of only reprimanding or criticizing.
- ✓ **Appreciate their identity** - Adolescence is marked by expression. Understand your teen may explore different clothing and hairstyles. They

probably won't want to be exactly like you were when you were a teen. Anticipate rebellion and allow room for mistakes.

- ✓ **Teach internet safety** - The majority of your teenager's life may revolve around the Internet. Therefore, it's critical to familiarize yourself with the technology your teen uses and the websites they frequent. Teach them never to share personal information online or give out their passwords. Model safe behavior such as not talking or texting while driving. Always encourage them to be a good peer and never bully via text or the Internet.
- ✓ **Set boundaries and limits** - Every teen is different. If yours does well with responsibilities, be a little more flexible with your boundaries. However, others will require more limits. Strive to be clear, concise, and consistent with expectations. Avoid the use of ultimatums, and enforce consequences.

## KEEP IN MIND

As challenging as the teen years can potentially be, remember you're not alone in the parenting process. Seek to model maturity and positive adult behavior. Refrain from giving in to the adolescent drama. Teach your teen how to communicate like an adult without yelling and/or pouting. Strive to be the example you want your teens to see.

***What steps will you take today to foster communication between your teenager and yourself?***