

High School Parents[®]

Sample Issue

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still make the difference!



Encourage persistence in your teen for success in school, life

It's always easier to give up on a tough job than it is to push through and complete it. However, that's not going to get your teen very far in life. Life's full of tough jobs, so the sooner your teen learns to be persistent, the better.

Persistence can also lead to success in school. Large projects will look less daunting to your child—and his grades will probably improve as a result.

You can encourage persistence in your teen if you:

- **Notice his progress.** Say things like, "You're really coming along with that," and "That wasn't easy, but you kept at it. Well done." Your teen will love the pat on the back.
- **Teach your teen** to cheer himself on. Positive self-talk, such as "I am

going to do this," can keep him going through the most difficult tasks.

- **Be a role model.** If you've been putting off a big chore, decide to do it. Say, "Today, I am going to work until I get this finished." Then keep your word.
- **Offer your help.** If your teen is struggling to complete something, a little help will motivate him to stick with it.
- **Treat your teen** to something special when he finishes a challenging task. Consider watching a movie together or cooking a fun dinner. Celebrate!

Source: Michele Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds and Caring Hearts*, ISBN: 0-7879-4605-2 (Jossey-Bass, 1-877-762-2974, www.josseybass.com).

Approach teens from a position of respect



You can talk all day about respecting others, being polite and following rules.

None of it will sink in—unless you practice it yourself.

A teen who feels respected might:

- **Treat others** as people of value because she is treated that way.
- **Follow rules** because she feels okay about not being in control.
- **Listen to others** because you listen to her.

A teen who feels disrespected might:

- **Argue a lot** because she feels people won't listen to her.
- **Resist authority** because following directions makes her uneasy.
- **Ignore others** because she feels ignored.

You should try to:

- **Be polite to your teen.** Speak to her the way you want her to speak to you and other people.
- **Ask her opinion.** While you cannot always follow her advice, you can keep it in mind.
- **Praise her** when she acts respectfully. Remind her that she represents your family when she is in the community.

Source: Michael J. Bradley, *Yes, Your Teen is Crazy: Loving Your Kid Without Losing Your Mind*, ISBN: 0-936197-44-7 (Harbor Press, Inc., 1-888-851-9090, www.harborpress.com).

Boost your teen's achievement by remaining involved in school



You don't have to read research reports to know that your involvement is important to your teen's school success. After all, teens usually rise to the level of what parents expect.

But if you did sit down to read a research report, you'd find that your instincts are exactly right. Parents who stay involved with the school have teens who are more successful.

Sadly, a lot of parents become dropouts. One in three high school

students say their parents have no idea how they are doing in school. And more than half say they could bring home a grade of C or lower without upsetting their parents.

So what can you do? Go to school events. And talk about your expectations for how he does in school. Your teen may not always *be the best*, but he should always *do his best*.

Source: Laurence Steinberg, *Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need to Do*, ISBN:068-483575-4 (Simon & Schuster, www.simonsays.com).

Tackle the least favorite subject first when completing homework



She has to study for a history test. She has math homework. And she has to write an English essay. Where should she start?

What's her least favorite subject? That's the one she should tackle first.

Not only will she get the worst out of the way, she'll learn an important lesson about taking responsibility.

Most people have to do things they don't like. And sometimes they procrastinate. But the laundry just piles up. The grass just gets longer. Sooner or later, they have to get that job done.

Doing homework is a great way to learn that lesson. If your teen puts off her most dreaded assignment, it will hang over her head during her study time. She'll keep thinking about what she doesn't want to do and will drag out other assignments.

But if your teen gets the tough task out of the way first, she will feel great. Everything else she works on will seem easy.

So each day, encourage your teen to do the hardest job first. She'll learn

a big lesson about responsibility. And she'll have saved the best for last!

Source: Ronald W. Fry, *Get Organized*, ISBN: 1-564-14461-5 (Thomson Delmar Learning Publishers, 1-800-347-7707, www.delmarlearning.com).

Do you find ways to spend time with your teen?



Teens pretend they want nothing to do with their parents. But they actually do want you around. It just takes creativity to find ways to spend time with them. Answer *yes* or *no* to see how you're doing.

- ___ 1. We have meals together whenever we can.
- ___ 2. I ask my teen for help around the house. It's more about the talking than about the work.
- ___ 3. I go to my teen's games, school activities and concerts.
- ___ 4. When my teen is watching TV, I sometimes sit down and watch the same show.
- ___ 5. I talk to my teen when we are in the car together.

How did you do?

Each *yes* means you're sneaking in time with your teen. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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High School Edition

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Help your teen understand the balance between school & work



Today's teens are faced with a lot of pressure, especially when it comes to managing their time. Most students balance

schoolwork, extracurricular activities and chores with a part-time job. The key to doing this successfully is for your teen to remember that being a student is his full-time job. Before your teen takes a part-time job, ask:

- **What does the job entail?** Will his job at the sporting goods store involve helping customers choose the right tennis rackets, or will he be stocking shelves in the back room? Make sure that his idea of the job matches up with what he'll actually be doing.
- **How will he get there?** Does he have a car? Will you drive him? Can he take public transportation?

- **Why does he want to take the job?** Will it look good on a college résumé or is he just looking for some extra cash? It's a good idea to "try out" jobs in a field he may want to go into later in life.
- **When will he be working?** Is it just after school or weekends, as well? Can he take extra time off during baseball season?
- **Who will he be working with?** Have you spoken with the management to see if it is reputable? Will he be working with some of his friends?
- **Where is the job located?** Is it in a safe neighborhood? Is it close enough for him to walk to from school?

Source: "Balancing High School and Part-Time Work," CollegeBoard.com, www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/high-school/45266.html.

Q: My 15-year-old has a page on a social networking site. I checked it out and was surprised and sad to read what she said. She talked about going to parties where alcohol was served, and described getting "wasted." We have had a serious talk and we are taking steps to address this issue. But other kids I know have similar comments on their pages. Should I be telling their parents? The school?

Questions & Answers

A: Social networking sites, such as MySpace® and Facebook, are new ways for teens to communicate. Where teens in the 1950s met at the malt shop and teens of later years met at the mall, today's teens meet each other online.

The sites provide a great way for young people to share information about themselves. But, as with any online conversation, what they say may not always be the truth.

In addition, there can be consequences. Employers and colleges regularly check out students' web pages to see what young people say about themselves. And once that information is posted, it can live forever. Even after your teen deletes the information from her page, an older version may be stored on someone else's computer.

Should parents know what you saw on their kids' home pages? Absolutely. Safety is always an issue when posting things online. But teens may also face legal trouble because of what they have written in their home pages. Not long ago, a local police department prosecuted students for underage drinking that they had bragged about on a social networking site.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

Combat common attendance excuses from your teenager



You've heard them all—every excuse in the book for why he should be allowed to stay home.

He's even invented some new ones that weren't around back when you were trying to pull one over on your parents. Here is a list of some common excuses teens use to get out of going to school—and ways to combat them:

- **"I don't feel good."** This excuse has been around for as long as, well, school itself. Unless he can describe his symptoms exactly, send him to school.
- **"If I could just sleep for an extra hour, I'd be so much more productive."** Respond that if he skips TV time tonight, he could go to bed an hour earlier.
- **"I have a project due at 2 p.m. that I haven't started yet."** Let him know that he needs to be more organized. He shouldn't skip one class just to finish an assignment for another one.
- **"I need to rest before the big game tonight."** School comes before extracurricular activities, and "big" events are no exception.
- **"We actually don't have school today. I forgot to tell you."** If this could be possible, call the school to make sure.

However, if your teen is constantly trying to stay home from school, it may be the sign of a larger problem. Speak to your teen's teacher or guidance counselor if you are worried about his reluctance to attend school.

It Matters: Discipline

Encourage your teen to become self-disciplined



Discipline and responsibility go hand in hand. And there are many ways you can help your teen become

more self-disciplined and responsible. Have your teen:

- **Use a calendar** to manage his time. Seeing his test and project dates alongside those of his other activities will help him see which evenings he has time to relax—and which nights he'll have to buckle down and study.
- **Begin to schedule** his own appointments. This will prepare him to be responsible for managing his time in the future.
- **Set a budget** and stick to it. He may have some spending money from an allowance or a part-time job. The budget will help him pay attention to his spending—and see that adding to his savings can be more rewarding than buying another shirt.
- **Plan a family outing**—even just a local day trip. Planning a trip teaches your teenager to be responsible. Have him research places to visit and come up with a budget. He should include travel expenses and money for meals.
- **Read the newspaper.** Learning about the issues world leaders deal with will help him see that his responsibilities (like washing the car) aren't the inconvenience he previously thought they were.

Source: "Six Tips for High Schoolers About To Start College," *AScribe Newswire*, January 17, 2007 (AScribe Newswire, 510-653-9400, www.ascribe.org).

Don't forget—your rules shape the adult your teen will become

Your teen might think she is an adult, but she's not—yet. It's hard to find the balance between the "right" amount of discipline and the "right" amount of independence.

You don't want to prevent your teen from growing up, but you also don't want to force her to grow up before she's ready. And you're getting tired of debating that point with your teen.

It helps to remember that your rules shape the adult she's about to become. She might complain now, but your discipline is teaching her the skills necessary to thrive in the real world.

So when you feel tempted to relax your rules, if you hear one



more time about what "Jenna's parents let Jenna do," don't. Remind yourself that you made these rules for a reason: to help your teen turn into the adult you want her to be.

Give consequences at the same time you establish the rules



Conflict between parents and teens is a cycle. The teen does something (or fails to do something). The parent becomes angry; the parent reacts by giving a consequence. The teen becomes angry, and the whole thing is repeated again the next time. This happens because:

- **The teen sees** the parent's reaction as unfair. Instead of focusing on his own behavior, he focuses on the reaction.
- **The teen blames** the parent for punishing him. Again, the teen does not think of his own behavior, only the parent's reaction.

You can break this cycle by getting away from reactive parenting. When you make a rule for your teen, don't just issue a command. State the rule, then give two situations. Situation A, which happens if he follows the rule, is pleasant for your teen. Situation B, which happens if he doesn't follow the rule, is a loss of a freedom your teen wants.

Now, instead of reacting, you have given your teen responsibility for his actions. He can make his own choices, and he knows what the results of each choice will be.

Source: Don Fontenelle, *Keys to Parenting Your Teenager*, ISBN: 0-7641-1290-2 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1-800-645-3476, www.barronseduc.com).