

High School Parents[®]

April 2021
Vol. 28, No. 8

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still make the difference!



Challenge your teen to find a 'mind-building' hobby

As your teen gets older, it becomes more important for him to think critically—to weigh the information he hears, sees and reads.

There are lots of fun ways you can help your teen develop his critical thinking skills. Encourage him to:

- **Read more than just assignments.** It can't be said too often that teens should read for pleasure—everything from newspapers to magazines to novels. The more your teen reads, the more new ideas he will be exposed to.
- **Do puzzles.** Crossword puzzles build word power. Jigsaw puzzles improve logic.
- **Play board games.** Chess is a classic game for teaching critical thinking. However, checkers, backgammon

and some popular brand name games, such as Scattergories and Catan, build important thinking skills, too.

- **Debate.** Most teens love to argue. Ask your teen to stop arguing with you and join the school debate team instead. No debate team? Perhaps your teen could start one.
- **Play a musical instrument.** Making music teaches about order, rhythm and patterns. It sharpens listening skills. And it can help teens feel calm, which improves their ability to think.
- **Start a blog or podcast.** Your teen will get practice planning and researching topics, creating and formatting content, and editing and publishing his work.

Don't let your teen's work begin to slide



As soon as the days become longer, students' attention spans seem to become shorter. It's

like there's something in the air that entices kids of all ages to skimp on studying in favor of extra time outdoors.

To ensure your teen is giving schoolwork her best efforts:

- **Talk about it.** Ask questions about her assignments—which one was the most interesting? Which one was the most difficult? This will remind your teen that even if she doesn't care about her schoolwork, you still do.
- **Time it.** If your teen averaged more than one hour of schoolwork per night during the winter, a new 15-minute average should make you suspicious. A comment like, "Your teacher sure let up on the assignments suddenly," might fix the problem.
- **Combine it.** Suggest that your teen do her reading on the front steps or in the backyard. That way, she can enjoy the fresh air—without sacrificing her schoolwork time.

A part-time job can teach your high schooler valuable skills



Think back to your first after-school job. Whatever that job was, it taught you a lot of skills—most of which

you probably use daily in your current job.

After a year of drastically reduced opportunities, the job market may be improving for teens in the coming months—and your teen may be able to benefit. A part-time job can teach him:

- **Independence.** He won't have you to help him out—he'll have to learn to be responsible for his own actions.
- **Timeliness.** Your teen won't last long at his job if he isn't reliably on time.
- **Discipline.** He'll learn to listen to—and cooperate with—the boss if he wants to keep his job.

- **Respect for others.** Your teen will have to learn how to treat and speak to others respectfully.
- **Time management.** Your teen will have to learn to balance his job and his schoolwork. Set limits on the number of hours he can work.
- **Money management.** Your teen will learn to be more responsible with his money when he realizes how much work goes into earning it.

“Apply yourself at whatever you do, whether you’re a janitor or taking your first summer job, because that work ethic will be reflected in everything you do in life.”

—Tyler Perry

Talk to your teenager about the dangers of vaping and smoking



Manufacturers may claim that electronic cigarettes (also known as “e-cigs”) are less harmful than traditional cigarettes.

However, according to the Centers for Disease Control, they are associated with health risks and should never be used by kids or young adults.

E-cigarette users use the devices to inhale a heat-produced vapor—hence the term “vaping.” Not all vaping devices look like cigarettes. Some look like pens. Others resemble vaporizers and e-hookahs. Because there is a variety of devices that can be used in different ways, they pose varying risks.

Arm yourself with the facts:

- **Teens who vape** face a much higher risk of COVID-19 than their peers

who do not vape, according to a new Stanford Medicine study.

- **Teens who vape** are three times more likely to start smoking regular cigarettes than their peers who haven't tried e-cigarettes.
- **Two-thirds of teens** who use e-cigs think they contain only flavoring. In reality, vaping can expose teens to nicotine and other dangerous chemicals.
- **Nicotine-use in adolescence** can damage the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control.

Talk to your teen about the dangers of vaping and smoking and insist that he refrain from doing either.

Source: “Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [niswc.com/high_vaping3](https://www.cdc.gov/niswc.com/high_vaping3).

Are you helping your teenager manage time?



Time management can be a real challenge for teens. The challenge gets greater as they get older and have to deal with complicated

projects and schedules. Students may feel the pinch, particularly during the second half of the school year.

Are you doing all you can to help your teen manage her time? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to write all of her academic and personal commitments on a calendar?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** with your teen about her priorities and explain that when she can't do everything, she should focus on what's most important?
- ___ **3. Do you suggest** your teen make and follow a schedule each week?
- ___ **4. Do you show** your teen how to break down large assignments and tasks into smaller, more manageable steps?
- ___ **5. Do you set an example** by using your time wisely?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen learn how to manage her time. For *no* answers, consider trying those ideas.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1291

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May.
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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

Discuss five different styles of decision-making with your teen



You know that your teen's decision-making skills will get better as she gains more experience. But did you know that she may make decisions in a different manner than you do?

Have a discussion about the five different styles of decision-making. Which type of decision maker do each of you think you are? Are there situations when one style might work better than another? Are you:

1. **Decisive?** People in this category often act quickly. They base their decisions on the information that is immediately available to them. They rarely change their minds.
2. **Flexible?** Flexible decision makers may act on limited information, but they are open to changing their minds. If their first solution to a problem doesn't work, they will switch to another one. And they will

reevaluate decisions as more information becomes available.

3. **Hierarchical?** These types of decision makers collect as much information as they can before making a decision. They look at all the information and determine the best solution. And they stick with their decision—because they worked out all the details before they made it.
4. **Integrative?** These people are like scientists. They collect and evaluate a lot of information, but realize there are many solutions that could work for the problem. They test each idea by imagining the outcome.
5. **Systemic?** These people collect as much information as possible and come up with as many solutions as possible. They then rank the solutions from *best* to *worst* and try out each one.

Source: L. Morton, "Five Decision-Making Styles for Small Business," Strategic Market Segmentation.

Writing can strengthen your teen's power of persuasion



Your teen is likely forming her own opinions about a lot of things. Teens are known for their strong views on what is "fair"—something you may have experienced when discussing her weekend curfew.

Beyond developing a tendency to take a stand on almost anything, as your goes through school, she is also learning to recognize and understand the different sides to an argument.

Use your teen's debating skills to promote her writing skills. Find out what she's passionate about. Is it politics? Maybe an elected official implemented a plan that she disagrees with. Is your teen more focused on

student rights? Perhaps she thinks a school policy is outdated and unreasonable.

Once you identify an issue your teen feels strongly about, encourage her to do something about it. Have her write a letter expressing her opinion.

Suggest that she research the topic so she can write a well-reasoned explanation of her position. Help her find the name of the appropriate person to address her letter to.

Your teen may feel so energized by her attempts to change the world that she won't even notice she's improving her writing skills—and learning to make a persuasive argument.

Q: My ninth-grader gets stressed out about everything—from schoolwork to current events! How can I help him better manage his anxiety and learn how to go with the flow?

Questions & Answers

A: This has been a stressful year for students, educators and parents. However, if the stress itself—rather than whatever set it off—is becoming too much for your teen to handle, it's time to step in and take some action.

To help your teen manage his everyday stress:

- **Teach him to recognize** the warning signs. Does he start grinding his teeth or biting his nails when he gets anxious? That's when he should take action. Stress is more manageable when it's caught early.
- **Help him create** an action plan. If your child is stressed over an upcoming project, show him how to break it into small parts. A big task is daunting, but a series of smaller ones may not be.
- **Encourage healthy habits.** A healthy diet and adequate sleep can help ease anxiety.
- **Suggest ways** for him to blow off steam. Exercise, reading or shooting hoops in the driveway may be all your teen needs to calm down.
- **Remind him** that you have his back. Your stressed-out teen may feel like the weight of the world is on his shoulders. So let him know you're right there with him and will help him overcome his stress so he can be successful.
- **Talk to his school counselor** or pediatrician if your teen's anxiety becomes difficult to manage.

It Matters: Building Respect

Self-respect helps teens learn to respect others



Self-respect is essential for high schoolers. A teen with self-respect believes in himself as a worthy person. He

knows he deserves to be treated fairly and kindly. And he knows it would be out of character for him to treat others differently.

To foster your teen's sense of self-respect:

- **Help him resist negative peer pressure.** Talk about ways your teen can avoid situations he knows are not right for him.
- **Keep a positive attitude.** Everyone experiences bumps in the road. These are temporary. Encourage your teen to make a fresh start after a setback.
- **Point out his strengths** and explain that people have different strengths and weaknesses. This awareness can help your teen control feelings of jealousy. The ability to be happy for others, rather than jealous of them, is an important part of self-respect.
- **Take a firm stance** against substance abuse. Tell your teen that self-respect includes respect for his personal safety and health.
- **Model self-respect.** Remember to speak positively about yourself. Be honest and follow-through with commitments. Forgive yourself when you make mistakes. Take good care of your health and your relationships.

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Fireside.

Community service promotes leadership skills and respect

There is a popular saying that “Great leaders don’t set out to be a leader, they set out to make a difference.” That’s what teen volunteers do every day.

Over the years, researchers have examined many of the positive effects of community service on students. They include:

- **Respect.** Teens who volunteer learn to respect others and themselves. As they work to solve problems, they gain new skills. They see the results of their work. They gain the respect not only of their peers, but also of adults and community members.
- **Leadership skills.** Teens who participate in community service learn how to organize others. They know how to work in teams. Those are skills they can use in the classroom today and in the workplace tomorrow.



- **Admiration.** Other teens think that those who volunteer are cool. They respect them as leaders and look up to them.

Source: *Volunteering: Indicators on Children and Youth*, Child Trends Data Bank.

Establish an environment of mutual respect in your home



Mutual respect is necessary for the healthy parent-teen relationships that support school success.

To show respect for your teen:

- **Ask for your teen's opinion** and advice. Teens feel valued when they are asked to help make a family decision.
- **Accept his views** and opinions, even when they differ from yours.

To encourage your teenager to respect you:

- **Lovingly insist on it.** When you are at odds, refrain from yelling or unkind words. Calmly say, “I understand. But I feel differently, and I’m in charge of this family. When you have your own family, I will respect your right to do things your way.”
- **Be consistent.** Set just a few rules, and enforce them—every time. Nothing makes a teen lose respect for parents faster than feeling that he can manipulate them any time he wants to.