It is easy for parents to feel that they have lost their influence over their children once children reach adolescence. Several organizations with different focuses but with the same goal of helping parents raise their teenagers banded together to develop this publication. Their message is that parents can do many things to foster their children's talents and skills while guiding them towards healthy development. Several ideas for parents are detailed that can help make a difference in the lives of their children. Some of the ideas include: (1) spend time with the children; (2) help teens gain a sense of self-confidence; (3) work with teens to set goals; (4) let teens know that education is valued highly; (5) stay involved in their children's schools; and (6) know where the children are and what they are doing at all times. A list of resources is included. (JDM)
Tips for Raising Teenagers

Parents Matter:

Prepared for the White House Conference on Teenagers

May 2, 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST YOUTH VIOLENCE
CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS

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PREPARED FOR THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON TEENAGERS

MAY 2, 2000

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Being a parent is one of life's most challenging and rewarding responsibilities. But the parents of teenagers may have the toughest job around. Adolescence is the journey from childhood to adulthood, from relying mostly on the judgment of others to learning how to make responsible decisions independently. It can be a difficult transition for both teens and their parents, especially in a society in which young people are confronted daily with the serious risks that come with sex, violence, drugs, alcohol, smoking, and school failure—risks that have science and common sense tell us are often related. Because the various risks teens face are so closely tied together, it's easy for parents to believe that they've lost their influence over their kids once they reach adolescence. The power of peers and the media can seem overwhelming. But research and experience both make clear: parents do matter in the lives of their teens. Adolescents need support, guidance, and caring from their parents as much as younger children do. And teens themselves say they want to hear from their parents about the challenges they face growing up, even if they don't always act like it.

Parents Matter: Tips for Raising Teenagers

Parents can do so much to foster their kids' talents and skills and guide them toward healthy development. Parents can also shape the communities their children grow up in by influencing the experiences their teenagers have. Parents can do so much to foster their kids' talents and skills and guide them toward healthy development. Parents can also shape the communities their children grow up in by influencing the experiences their teenagers have.
Spend time with your children and teens. Engage in activities that suit their ages and interests. Shared experiences build a bank account of affection and trust that forms the basis for future communication. Eat together as often as possible. Meals are a great opportunity to talk about the day's events and grow closer with your children. Use the time for conversation, not confrontation. Read, watch TV or movies, and surf the web together. Exercise or participate in sports as a family. Get involved in community service with your children. Help them identify their strengths, interests, and talents and find opportunities in which they can be ambitious and develop these skills. Help children and teens gain a sense of self-confidence. Encourage teens to get involved in fun, safe, fulfilling activities. Participate in activities that suit their ages and interests. Engage them in conversations and build a foundation for healthy communication. Be present and attentive, provide positive reinforcement, and encourage their growth and development. Spend time with your kids, engaged in activities that suit their ages and interests.
Help your teenagers set goals and understand that they have options for the future.

Help kids understand how the choices they make now can affect their whole lives. Introduce them to successful people in your community who can explain what it took to succeed. Teens with long-term goals for education or work will be less likely to compromise their futures by engaging in risky behavior. Help kids understand how the choices they make now can affect their whole lives.

Kids will be the first to notice. Teachers immediately. Performance, talk to your teen and his or her parents involved in your children's education at least. If you notice a drop in sign of other problems. If you notice a drop in school attendance, discuss it with your child and the school counselor. If middle and high schools, try to stay involved. Key functions. Middle and high school. Elementary schools but discourage the kids get older. Schools are often very connected to their children's schools. Know where your kids are and what they're up to. It makes you a caring parent.

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Let your kids know that you value education highly. Stay involved with your teens. School failure is often a warning sign of other problems. If you notice a drop in performance, talk to your teen and his or her parents immediately.
Get to know your children's friends and their families.

Friends have a strong influence on each other, so it is important to get to know your children's friends and their parents. Much peer pressure is actually positive. Encourage your teens to hang out with healthy, positive peers and to avoid those who encourage risky behavior.

Parents who are open and honest can express their values in a caring way. Many parents worry about seeming hypocritical, particularly if they engaged in risky behavior as teenagers. By being open and honest, you can express your own feelings. By doing so, your children can see that the values in a caring way.

Communicating with your children about difficult issues is most successful when you, as a parent, are certain of your own values and attitudes.

Be clear about your own values and attitudes.

Respectfully answering each question or topic thoughtfully. Talk to kids, not at them.

Although it may be difficult to initiate a conversation, start when your children are curious and begin to ask questions. Make it clear that everyone experiences pain, fear, anger, and anxiety, and talk with them about the appropriate ways to deal with troubling emotions. Make sure your kids know the dangers of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol, and sex. Frequent communication on such issues should begin early in childhood and continue through adulthood.

Growing up and the risks they may encounter: sex, drugs, alcohol, smoking, and violence.

Talk with your children early and often about the pressures of friends, family, and society. Welcome their friends into your home and talk with them openly.

Friends have a strong influence on each other, so it is important to get to know your children's friends and their families.
Set the right example.

Parents help their kids.

Most communities have resources to help. Don't be afraid to stop in and seek outside help.

Be a living day-to-day example of your values and standards. Show the compassion, honesty, discipline, and openness you want your children to have.

If you abuse drugs or alcohol, know that your kids are watching and what they observe may undercut your good intentions to keep them substance-free. Don't smoke or allow smoking in your home. Model non-violent behavior.

If you want young people to shun violence, you need to demonstrate how.

Parents who are dating should know that their kids see what they do, not just hear what they say.

Programs and support for teens in trouble are great, but all kids benefit from encouragement, attention, and support.

You are proud of them for doing the right thing—encourage them. Let your kids know you care.

Don't focus attention on them only when there's a problem. Let your kids know you care.

Pay attention to kids before they get into trouble.

Learn the signs of drug and alcohol use, school failure, depression, and violence. Here are some clues to watch for:

- Large amounts of time spent alone in isolation from family and friends
- Sudden changes in school performance, drastic declines in grades, and frequent absences
- Changes in behavior, discipline, and appearance
- New friends or estrangement from old friends
- New and sudden purchase of clothing or equipment
- New substance use
- Change in sleeping habits
- Money or property missing
- - If you suspect your kids are dealing or smoking and what they observe may undercut your good intentions to keep them substance-free, don't smoke or allow smoking in your home. Model non-violent behavior.

These are just a few signs that your teenager needs help.

Don't be afraid to step in and seek outside help. Most communities have resources to help parents who are dealing with issues.

Know that their kids see what they do, not just hear what they say.

Be a living day-to-day example of your values and standards. Show the compassion, honesty, discipline, and openness you want your children to have.
Make your home safe and teach your kids the importance of safety. If you own guns, make sure you store them securely. Keep locked up. Don't bring illegal drugs into your home and keep your liquor cabinet locked. Don't smoke around your kids or allow others to do so. Make sure your teens know the danger of drinking and driving, wear seatbelts, get good driver education.

Get involved in your community. Become a member of or employ your teens at your place of work. Get involved with the youth group at your place of worship or local community center. Patronize businesses that promote healthy choices by teens. Help other teens in your community by being drug-free, alcohol-free, and smoke-free. Join community organizations that promote policies to adopt and enforce tobacco- and drug-free campuses. Advocate for teen-friendly and safe places that can make a real difference in the lives of their children and teens, like the community center, the library, or a local park.

Know what your kids are listening to, watching, reading, and knowing what you are as a parent to serve as a filter. It is your role as a parent to set the example.

Place of worship or local community center.

Know what your kids are

Teach your kids the importance of safety.
For information on parenting skills and other ways to raise a drug-free child, please visit www.theantidrug.com.

For Alcohol and Drug Information at (800) 788-2800.

For printed or audiovisual materials, call the National Clearinghouse.

www.theantidrug.com
(301) 608-8098
Silver Spring, MD 20910
P.O. Box 13905

National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth

www.ncfy.com
(301) 608-8098
Silver Spring, MD 20911
P.O. Box 1305

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

207 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Suite 200
Washington, DC 20008

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

www.noviolence.net
(415) 512-4008
San Francisco, CA 94105-9781
33 New Montgomery Street, 21th Floor

National Campaign Against Youth Violence

www.toobaccofreekids.org
(202) 296-5469
Washington, DC 20036
1797 L Street, N.W., Suite 800

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Resources:
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