

Reacting to your teen during changing times

- Parents still have a tremendous amount of influence, even though your teen is becoming increasingly independent.
- The way in which you convey concern, information, and guidance influences whether or not your teen will be impacted by what you have to say. Parents that show that they care, give support, recognize special effort, show and model courtesy, are flexible, use humor, and don't nag have stronger more positive relationships with their teens.
- Parents that give respect get respect. Parents who do not listen to their teen or acknowledge their teen's opinions are not going to be respected.
- Keeping the lines of communication open with your teen will allow you to gain a better understanding of your teens' behavior and will help you address the behavior and offer suggestions.

AVOIDING ANGER

It is important to avoid reacting in anger which may cause communication to close down and prevent you from effectively solving problems with your teen.

Your ultimate goal is to help guide your teen through the social and emotional changes during adolescence.

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Selected References

Abar, C., Abar, B., & Turrisi, R. (2009). The impact of parental modeling and permissibility on alcohol use and experienced negative drinking consequences in college. *Addictive Behaviors*, **34(6)**: 542-547.

Livingston, J. A., Testa, M., Hoffman, J. H., & Windle, M. (2010). Can parents prevent heavy episodic drinking by allowing teens to drink at home? *Addictive Behaviors*, **35(12)**: 1105-1112.

For more information:

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Parents are the Solution

Part I in a Series of 6

THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WORLD OF THE ADOLESCENT

Tips for Helping your High School Student Make the Transition From Childhood to Adulthood

A Collaboration of the State College Communities that Care Partnership

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CHANGES

Teens experience many changes in their physical appearances, the social demands placed on them, and the types of challenges that they must address and resolve. It is important for parents to appreciate these changes and the role they play in risky behavior (such as using alcohol or drugs) so that they can help teens make a smooth transition.

Physical Development: Early vs. Late Maturation

- During high school, early developing boys and girls tend to be seen by adults and peers as more attractive and competent. Late developers are seen as less socially mature.
- These attributions are unfortunate because they have little basis in fact and can affect adolescents' self esteem and the decisions they make.
- Even though teens look more "adult-like" they still need adult guidance and time to develop mature decision making skills.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Some adults think it is "okay" if their teens are allowed to drink alcohol because they appear more "adult-like" in their physical appearance. However, studies consistently show that when teens are allowed to drink even *limited amounts* of alcohol in their homes, they drink more heavily and more often outside the home. The bottom line: no matter how they appear, teens still need adults' help to make good decisions.

Thinking Skills: "It won't happen to me"

Teens tend to think differently than adults, which puts them at a disadvantage when coping with social and peer pressures related to such things as alcohol consumption, drugs, and relationships.

- Teens are most concerned with the present. To the typical teen thinking ahead means wondering about what they are going to do later on today or this weekend, as opposed to in the future.
- Teens tend to focus on immediate feelings as in "how do I feel right now?" as opposed to "how will this affect me later?"
- Teens often make decisions based on extremely limited information. For example, teens may think, "My friend drinks on occasion and has never had a problem" or "If I do it just this once I will probably be okay."

ROLE OF PARENTS

The scientific literature shows that teens benefit when their parents guide them through the adult thinking process about the short- and long-term risks of drinking.

Although some resistance is likely and quite normal, when parents express concern and caring as the basis for their discussions with their teens, their teens tend to be more open and responsive.



A Teen's Social World is Complex

Teens want their parents to recognize them as

unique, independent individuals. At the same time, teens' relationships with their friends are building in importance. Teens use their friends as a basis for forming opinions, attitudes, and determining the "correct" ways to act and think.

- Differences in power between friends are small compared to differences in power between teens and adults.
- Differences in power allow teens to work out problems without always giving in to a powerful adult.
- Looking to friends for answers and support is not necessarily bad except when a teen has a friend who has a forceful personality or is especially "bossy" or "controlling."



AVOIDING CONFLICT

A difficult situation occurs when the values and wishes of parents conflict with the values of peers. Research demonstrates that the more positive the relationship between parents and teens, the more likely it is that teens will rely on parental input for important issues.

This emphasizes the importance of forming a good, supportive relationship with your teen.