

High School Parents[®]

October 2015
Vol. 23, No. 2

Educational Service Unit #8

still make the difference!



Show your high schooler how to make responsible decisions

Your teen will have to make all kinds of decisions over the course of her high school career, from selecting classes to facing difficult peer pressure. Help her learn to make decisions that will enable her to succeed both academically and socially.

If your teen comes to you with a problem, walk through these steps:

1. **Ask her to describe** the situation she is facing. Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered with just *yes* or *no*.
2. **Discuss possible choices.** Help your teen see different alternatives. Make a pro-con list and evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of every choice. Talk through how different consequences could affect your teen's goals.

3. **Allow your teen to make a** decision and carry it out. Later, ask her what she learned from making that choice. Ask if she would make the same—or a different—decision if faced with a similar problem in the future. Remember: While it may sometimes seem like your teen is challenging your values and beliefs, she still needs your support and guidance to make important decisions about her future. Teens often rebel as a way to assert their independence. But with your support and unconditional love, she will develop the judgment that will guide her to make responsible decisions.

Source: American Medical Association, "Helping Your Teen Make Responsible Choices," Palo Alto Medical Foundation, nswc.com/responsible_choice.

Recommend specific books to your teen



Teens are much more likely to do things when they are given specific suggestions rather

than general ones. "Take out the trash and put away your laundry" usually gets better results than "Finish your chores."

This same idea also works when encouraging teens to read. Suggesting a specific book for your teen to read may be more effective than simply saying, "You really should read more." But with all the books out there, how do you know which one to recommend?

That's where Goodreads comes in—the world's largest website for readers and book recommendations. You can browse titles by category or check out a list of the most popular young adult books, which is updated monthly. Goodreads even has an app you can download on your phone.

So before you head to the library with your teen, check out www.goodreads.com and make a list of books to suggest.

Encourage your high schooler to have a positive attitude



Having a positive attitude is important for success in school and in life. To nurture positivity, encourage your teen to:

- **Be hopeful.** On most days, some things will go well and others won't. Don't dwell on what went wrong. Focus on what went well.
- **Laugh.** Remember: Nothing is better than humor for getting rid of a negative attitude.
- **Move on.** Your teen didn't get picked for a certain team and the next chance to try out isn't until next year. After some disappointment, encourage him to put it behind him and try something else for the time being.

- **Seek opportunities.** If your teen wants to work with animals, he should look for a way to make it happen. Is there a veterinarian in your area who could use some help? Encourage your teen to call a few of them and find out!

Source: B.A. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide to Building Character*, Free Spirit Publishing.

"To succeed, you need to find something to hold on to, something to motivate you, something to inspire you."

—Tony Dorsett

Share strategies to help your teen succeed on math tests



Math tests can be difficult to prepare for. After all, there aren't any dates to remember or essays

to write. But you can help your teen do her best by sharing a few math test strategies.

Before the test, your teen should:

- **Practice.** She can redo homework problems or problems from quizzes. Encourage her to focus on the problems she had trouble understanding or got wrong, and work on them until she is confident she can solve them.
- **Create a "formula sheet."** On one sheet of paper, have her write down all the formulas she needs to know.

During the test, your teen should:

- **Write down those formulas** as soon as she gets her test. That

way, she will be less likely to forget what she has memorized.

- **Read the directions carefully.** Remind her that she can lose points for simply forgetting to show her work or circle her answer!
- **Estimate.** If one step in the problem asks her to subtract 32 from 109, she probably knows the answer should be around 80. So if she gets 17, she should try again!
- **Take her time.** A math test is not a race.

After the test, your teen should:

- **Go back and check her work.** She should rework any problem she was uncertain about.
- **Look for careless errors.** Are all of the decimal points in the right place? Did she remember the negative sign?

Are you limiting your teen's screen time?



Teens are spending more and more time online and in front of screens. Are you finding ways to limit your teen's screen

time? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Have you established times** when texting is not allowed, such as during mealtimes and study times?
- ___ **2. Have you made sure** there is no TV in your teen's bedroom?
- ___ **3. Is your family computer** in a central place so you can keep an eye on the websites your teen is visiting and the people he's communicating with?
- ___ **4. Do you make sure** your teen is offline during homework time (unless he needs the Internet for an assignment)?
- ___ **5. Do you have a digital curfew**—a certain time when the cell phone must be parked in a central place? It should not be in your teen's bedroom at night.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are taking steps to limit your teen's online time. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

High School Parents
still make the difference!

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

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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 by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2015 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Make note-taking easier with the six-question method



Taking notes while reading is one of the best ways for your teen to remember what she has studied. The six-question method is one effective way to take notes. It helps students identify and remember the most important people, events and dates when studying history or reading literature.

Have your teen create six headings on a piece of paper: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* As she reads an assignment, have her look for the answers to each of these questions and jot down relevant facts and information:

1. **Who?** Who was there? Who were the most important characters?
2. **What?** What were the most important things that happened?

3. **Where?** Where did this event take place? Why is that place significant? Would the event have been different if it had occurred elsewhere?

4. **When?** When did it happen? Were there any important reasons the event happened when it did (and not earlier or later)?

5. **Why?** What were the causes of this event? Why is it important to learn about this event?

6. **How?** How did it happen? How did it turn out?

If your teen has trouble finding answers to these questions when she's reading, suggest that she practice by reading an article from the newspaper. News stories aim to answer these six questions in the first few paragraphs.

A busy schedule can affect your teen's grades and health



Your teen is taking challenging classes, has a new part-time job and just made the varsity team.

He's also worried about getting into college, so he tries to fit in regular volunteer work as well.

Add these commitments together and you can end up with an overscheduled teen. Many of today's teens rush from one activity to another. And experts say all that frantic activity can lead to health problems.

The American Academy of Pediatrics warns about the pressures on overscheduled teens. A schedule that's chock-full can lead to headaches, irritability and

exhaustion—all of which can affect your teen's school performance.

You want your teen to be free to make his own choices. But you also need to provide a reality check. Help him think about which activities are most important. He should focus on those, even if it means dropping some others. You can help him decide what changes he needs to make.

You may also notice that he's wasting time. If he's texting and spending hours making Vine videos, you may want to impose a "digital curfew." That action alone could give him more time for sleep, studies and the activities he cares about.

Source: S.G. Boodman, "Too-Busy Teens Feel Health Toll," The Washington Post, nswc.com/too_busy.

Q: My daughter has disliked a few of her teachers before, but now she has one who seems especially hard for her to deal with. Everything my teen says about this teacher is negative. What should I do?

Questions & Answers

A: When children are young, they usually adore their teachers. But as they get older, they may find there's a particular teacher they just don't like. That's especially true in middle and high school, where students have a different teacher for each subject.

As a parent, you may be tempted to rush to your teen's defense. But many experts say the best thing you can do is to help her learn to deal with the situation herself. Here's how:

1. Acknowledge her feelings.

Tell your teen that it's okay not to like a teacher. But it's important for her to learn how to work with people she doesn't like. Tell your teen you know she is capable of working things out.

2. Listen. Help her figure out what is causing the problem. Is the homework too hard? Does your teen have trouble understanding the content? As you listen, remember that you're only getting one side of the story. Teens aren't often the most objective reporters.

3. Encourage action. Once your teen is clear about the problem, she should talk with the teacher.

4. Monitor. Keep watching and listening. Are things improving? If not, it may be time for you to meet with your teen and the teacher.

It Matters: Working Together

Stay involved during the high school years!



When your teen reaches high school, your involvement with her education is likely to change. Now you're more like a coach—on the sidelines but still very involved with the game. Here are some ways to stay involved:

- **Talk with your teen** regularly about her classes. Discuss what she's learning.
- **Get to know** your teen's teachers, counselors and the office staff.
- **Help your teen manage** school projects. These can be challenging for the teenage brain. Work with her to develop a realistic plan for getting things done.
- **Use all the tools available** to monitor your teen's attendance and school performance. If there is a way to check grades online, do that regularly. When progress reports or report cards are issued, discuss them with your teen.
- **Be aware of the requirements** for graduation. Don't wait until the last few weeks of your teen's senior year to discover she won't be graduating with her class.
- **Help your teen make a plan** for the future. Work with the school to make sure she takes the classes she needs to be ready for a career or college after high school.
- **Serve on school committees** or volunteer at school events, if possible, to meet your teen's friends and to know what's going on in school.

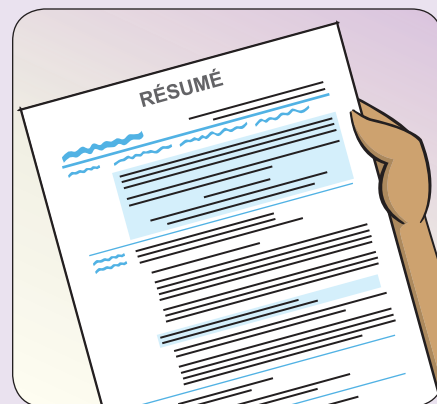
School counselors can help students applying for college

Maybe your teen has his heart set on attending a certain college. Or perhaps he has no idea of where he wants to go—or whether he could get in.

As high school students move through the process of applying for college, their guidance counselors become key allies.

Your teen's counselor is available to help with:

- **Selecting schools.** Even if he wants to go to a particular college, it's a good idea for your teen to apply to more than one school. The school counselor can work with him to select schools that would be a good fit.
- **Writing a recommendation.** Many colleges ask school counselors to write a description of the student. Your teen can



make the counselor's job easier by preparing a short résumé which includes his accomplishments in and out of school.

- **Staying on top of paperwork.** From applications to student aid, there's a lot to keep track of. Most teens need parents and counselors to support them in this task!

Expect your high schooler to treat teachers with respect



Ask teachers about their biggest frustration and you may get a surprising answer. It's not the working hours or the pay. Often, it's the feeling that they aren't treated with respect.

Most high school students say *they* want to be treated with respect. But when it comes to their teachers, teens admit that they don't always extend that same respect to them.

That's a place where you can make a difference. Let your teen know that you expect her to treat teachers with respect.

Remind your teen that she shouldn't forget her manners when she leaves the house. The same behaviors you expect of her at home are things she should display at school. You wouldn't let her speak rudely to you—so she shouldn't speak that way to a teacher.

Talk to your teen about what respectful behavior looks like. Your teen can show respect to teachers in simple ways—waiting her turn to speak in class, coming to school prepared and arriving on time.

Source: G.D. McKay, Ph.D. and others, *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World*, Prima Publishing.