

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Talk to your high schooler about the dangers of vaping

Electronic cigarettes (also known as “e-cigs”) are marketed as a safe substitute for tobacco. But according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, they are not nearly as safe as teens and parents may think.

Users don’t smoke e-cigs. They 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.

E-cigs, in particular, are presenting a new challenge for schools. They are more difficult to detect than regular cigarettes and are often used to disguise marijuana use on school grounds.

Arm yourself with the facts:

- **Teens are more likely to vape** than to smoke. The Centers for Disease

Control reports that 45 percent of high school students have tried an e-cigarette—while only 32 percent have tried regular cigarettes.

- **Teens who try e-cigarettes** 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. This may be because the makers of these products don’t have to say what’s in them. In reality, vaping can expose teens to nicotine and other dangerous chemicals.

Talk to your teen about the dangers of e-cigs and insist that he stay away from vaping and smoking.

Source: “Teens and E-Cigarettes,” National Institute on Drug Abuse, nisdwc.com/high_vaping1; S. Soneji, Ph.D. and others, “Association Between Initial Use of e-Cigarettes and Subsequent Cigarette Smoking Among Adolescents and Young Adults,” *JAMA Pediatrics*, nisdwc.com/high_vaping2.

Prepare to get the most from conferences



Parent-teacher conferences don’t have to be intimidating. They can provide great information

about your teen and what she’s studying in school. Partnering with your teen’s teachers will help make the remainder of the school year a success.

To get the most from a parent-teacher conference:

- **Talk to your teen** before the meeting. Is there anything she would like you to discuss with the teacher?
- **Bring a list of questions** you would like to ask and topics you would like to discuss. Don’t rely on your memory.
- **Discuss your teen’s work.** Your teen may not know why her last essay received a poor grade, but the teacher will, so ask!
- **Discuss your teen’s behavior.** Does she participate in class? Interact with other students?
- **Develop a plan** with the teacher. Explore ways you both could support your teen.
- **Talk to your teen** after the conference. Let her know what you and her teacher discussed.

Encourage your teenager to develop a strong work ethic



The job market is becoming tougher for today's teens as more adults are beginning to take jobs traditionally

filled by teens. And many managers say that teens aren't as employable as they used to be. They say many teens act as if the work is beneath them, do the bare minimum or are simply not responsible enough. Simply put: Many teens lack a strong work ethic.

A *work ethic* is a set of values and beliefs that include traits such as reliability, dedication and pride in one's work. Having a strong work ethic is not only necessary for success in the workforce—it is necessary for success in school, too.

To encourage a strong work ethic:

- **Give your teen responsibilities.** He should do his chores because that's what he's expected to do. And he should take responsibility for his

actions. If he misses a deadline for a school assignment, don't write an excuse to the teacher. It's your teen's responsibility to talk with the teacher and reach a solution.

- **Be a role model.** Display a positive attitude about work and show your teen that you take your job and your responsibilities seriously.
- **Reinforce delayed gratification.** Remind your teen that he should work before he plays. Encourage him to finish the first draft of his paper *before* he goes out with his friends.

"Parents should plant deeply the seed of the work ethic into the hearts and habits of their children."

— Joseph B. Wirthlin

Remind your teen of test-taking strategies that work for all tests



Whether it's that all-important driver's test or a short quiz in math class, testing is a fact of life for today's teens. While there

are specific ways to approach each kind of test, there are some general strategies that will help your teen do his best on *any* test.

When your teen is taking a test, remind him to:

1. **Read the instructions carefully.** He should make sure he knows exactly what he is supposed to do.
2. **Look for direction words** that tell him what to do, such as *compare*, *list*, *describe*, *define* and *summarize*.

3. **Read through all the questions** quickly before he starts. He should think about how much time he has and decide how much time he can spend on each question.
4. **Read each question carefully** as he begins the test. He should determine what he thinks the answer is *before* he reads any choices provided.
5. **Skip a question** if he isn't sure of the answer. He should answer all the questions he knows first. Then he can come back to the others.
6. **Allow time to go back** and check his answers. Do they make sense? Are his sentences complete?

Are you helping your shy teen find ways to cope?



Nearly everyone has felt shy at one time or another. But some teens seem to be shy in *any* new situation. They find it hard

to make friends. They don't get invited to parties. They are afraid to speak up in class.

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

- ___ 1. **Do you take time to show your teen that you love her?**
- ___ 2. **Do you help your teen get involved in activities she loves?** Joining like-minded students is an excellent way for shy teens to connect.
- ___ 3. **Have you helped your teen find volunteer activities?** Helping others makes teens feel good about themselves.
- ___ 4. **Do you help your teen role-play challenging situations?** Practice can help a teen build confidence.
- ___ 5. **Will you talk with her teachers** if shyness affects her schoolwork?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your shy teen gain confidence and social skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Helping teens handle stress can reduce the risk of dropping out



Students who drop out of school limit their life choices forever. But every year, many teens make this destructive choice.

A Canadian study looked at teens who faced big challenges. All were low-income. Most had low grades. But only some of the students dropped out. What made the difference?

The study found that it's not always a school issue. Often, a difficult life event or problem at home—death, divorce, health or legal problems, or even a move—can tip the scales and lead teens to drop out of school.

Parents can't always control the stress that happens in their teens' lives. But they can find effective ways to help them cope. Teens are often moody; however, it's important to

pay attention to a major change, such as suddenly losing interest in old friends and things they used to enjoy.

If you notice signs of stress:

- **Encourage your teen** to take a break. Sometimes just listening to music or watching an old movie can offer some stress relief.
- **Discourage negative self-talk.** Teens under stress sometimes think that nothing will ever change. Help your teen see that even small changes can make a difference.
- **Help your teen** break big challenges into smaller parts. A huge project can seem overwhelming. So find one small thing she can finish today.

Source: V. Dupéré and others, "High School Dropout in Proximal Context: The Triggering Role of Stressful Life Events," *Child Development*, Society for Research in Child Development, Inc., nswc.com/high_stressdropout.

Studies show it's important for teens to get enough sleep



Sleepy students have trouble learning, are less likely to join sports teams and are more likely to feel depressed. Research

shows it's just as important to get a good night's rest after a day of learning as it is the night before a test—learning continues to take place while your teen sleeps!

But high schoolers often have trouble getting enough sleep. Their natural rhythm is to sleep late in the morning and stay up later at night. The typical high school day starts early in the morning and interferes with teens' biological sleep patterns.

To reset your teen's internal clock and help him wake up ready to learn:

- **Encourage him** to follow a bedtime routine. Experts say dimming the

lights at night and avoiding bright screens right before bedtime can make it easier for teens to fall asleep.

- **Tell him to avoid caffeine.** Consuming caffeine just a few hours before bedtime can reduce total sleep time by one hour.
- **Don't let him sleep** all weekend. Your teen shouldn't sleep more than two hours past his normal wake-up time. His body will be too confused when he has to wake up early again on Monday.
- **Suggest exercise.** Sports, running and other activities—at least a few hours before bedtime—will help your teen sleep soundly.

Source: S. Spinks, "Adolescents and Sleep," PBS, nswc.com/high_moresleep.

Q: My tenth-grade son has always gotten his own way. Even in grade school, his tantrums were so bad I gave in. But now he's totally rebellious. He refuses to do anything I ask. He calls me names. He acts the same way at school and his teachers are as frustrated as I am. How can we help this child get back in control?

Questions & Answers

A: Most teenagers go through periods of rebelling against authority. But it sounds like your son has moved beyond what's acceptable—at home and at school.

And while dealing with his defiance may be challenging, you must deal with it. Otherwise, he'll never be able to hold a job, have a healthy relationship or live with others.

Here's what to do:

- **Meet with his teachers.** You all need to be on the same page—and you'll need to present a united front.
- **Set up basic expectations.** Choose your battles, but do focus on things like speaking respectfully to others.
- **Let him know** that there will be consequences for his actions. The consequences should be roughly proportional to what he has done. (Taking the car without permission is not the same as calling someone a name.)
- **Enforce consequences** when he tests the limits. Stay calm and remember that he needs a parent, not a friend.
- **Look for help** for your son and for yourself. A friendly boss, a Big Brother, a mentor or a coach can help you both navigate this troubling time.

It Matters: Homework

Proofreading is an essential step in writing



Your teen spent last week researching and writing a big paper. He checked books out of the library and took careful notes.

He didn't even have to stay up all night to finish it—impressive, right? Not if he printed it and rushed out the door without a second look.

Technology has come a long way in helping students with spelling and grammar, but spell-checking programs aren't perfect. If your teen types *their* instead of *they're*, the program won't notice anything is wrong—but his teacher will.

To avoid careless errors, encourage your teen to:

- **Include proofreading** as a step when he creates a schedule for completing a paper.
- **Slow down.** By slowing down when reading over a paper, your teen is more likely to catch errors. Our eyes tend to fill in missing letters or words. He should also try reading it aloud—sometimes the ear will catch what the eye skips over.
- **Proofread more than once.** Some students even read a paper from back to front so spelling errors are more likely to stand out.
- **Understand the types of errors** he typically makes. If he always forgets to number his pages, that should be something he double-checks.
- **Remain positive** even when he doesn't catch all of his mistakes. Remind him that magazines and newspapers have many editors to proofread their copy, and they still make mistakes!

Students benefit when they assess the quality of their work

Successful students understand the importance of reviewing their assignments before turning them in. By taking an objective look at the quality of their own work, teens become independent learners who are motivated and more likely to earn better grades.

Here are six questions your teen should ask herself *before* turning in an assignment:

1. **Does this meet** the requirements my teacher laid out?
2. **Am I satisfied** with what I am turning in? Does it reflect my best work?
3. **Have I given credit** to others whose work I used?
4. **Which part** of this project am I most pleased with?



5. **Is there anything** that could be improved?
6. **What have I learned** from this assignment?

Help your teen overcome common homework hurdles



Removing homework hurdles does not mean doing homework for your teen—that should never happen. Instead, help him cope with these common homework problems:

- **Not doing the homework**, or not turning it in. Let your teen know you are concerned and that completing homework is a top priority. Offer strategies to support him. For example, he could make a to-do list each day and check off completed work.
- **Not caring about homework.** Motivate him by praising his effort

as he works. And remind him that other activities will have to wait until homework is finished.

- **Not understanding** the homework. If your teen doesn't understand the directions or the work, encourage him to ask a classmate or the teacher for clarity.
- **Too much homework**—or not enough. If your teen is doing well in the class, then the homework is probably the right amount. But if homework consistently takes all night, or if he's not doing well in the class but only seems to have a few minutes' worth of homework each night, he should talk to the teacher.