



rape and abuse crisis center

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Parenting Adolescents and Teenagers

Parenting adolescents can be a challenging task. Adolescents are experiencing great physical, emotional and intellectual growth. It's a wonderful time, yet it can also be a disruptive time. Teenagers are moving from childhood to adulthood. They are reaching out for independence with skills that have yet to be proven. Parents can help ease the transition and insure a positive future relationship with their teens by keeping the following information in mind.

Maintain a positive outlook

- Remember, adolescence is temporary and your attitude can help your teens develop and maintain a good self image, confidence, and competence. It's normal for teens to suddenly become critical of their family. They are trying to break away and need an excuse. Enjoy helping them discover their talents and interests.

Establish clear and simple rules

- Your teen is experimenting, and just as you had to protect him/her from danger when he/she was a young child, you need to offer protection now. Part of what your adolescent needs to know is that he/she has a responsibility to the family and your community. Continue to enforce family rules, although this may be a good time to review your rules to see if they are still practical.

Keep the lines of communication open

- This is one of the most important tasks you have. Most teens don't know how to communicate. Listen closely to what your teen says and avoid judgmental responses. Seek outside assistance to help solve problems instead of risking the loss of your relationship with your teen.

Be Patient

- Your teen may not be comfortable with him/herself. His/her body and emotions suddenly seem strange and his/her new skills are not yet perfected. Teens may be very critical of themselves and need your support and love.

Praise good behavior

- Remind your teen that you think they are wonderful. Help them remember how valuable they are.

Evaluate your own attitude

- Your teen's push for independence may trigger an equal but opposite response from you. Their independent behavior may make you aware there isn't much time left for you to teach them everything they need to learn from you. Don't begin to lecture or become too controlling. It only adds stress to the situation.

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01/09

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F: Education/Revised Handouts/Parenting Adolescents and Teenagers

Get professional help if your teen's behavior gets out of control

- A good counselor is often the key to helping parents and their teens get over rough spots.

Pointers for Parents of Teenagers

- Keep the climate at home warm and welcoming.
- Be encouraging. Don't put them down; build them up. Be reassuring in their efforts and activities.
- When problems arise, focus on the behaviors that are causing the problem. Don't attack the person, discuss behaviors. Avoid name calling, put downs, blaming, and dredging up the past.
- Avoid lecturing when mistakes are made. Communicate openly, asking "What did you learn from this?"
- Be as respectful and courteous in your own behaviors and conversations as you would expect your teen to be.
- Respect the adolescent's search for independence. Encourage them to think for themselves.
- Discuss problems and the limits to freedom openly and honestly. Be clear with expectations and boundaries. Be protective, but not over-protective.
- Hold family conferences and allow your teen to participate in decision making.
- Avoid comparing one child with another and don't blame older children for the behavior of younger siblings.
- Share feelings and emotions with your teen.
- Be frank, open, and positive about sex.
- Be available when they need you.
- Recognize your own short-comings and be willing to take responsibility for mistakes you make.
- Keep the laughter going. Maintain your sense of humor.
- Listen carefully to your teen. Be a safe person with whom they can talk.

References:

Hemming, James. Adapted by Family and Marriage Education Center, Mankato, MN
National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse: <http://www.childabuse.org>