Creating Positive Experiences for Teens

By: Robert Sege, MD, PhD, FAAP



Raising teenagers (/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/default.aspx) can be both incredibly difficult and incredibly rewarding. They are becoming young adults. Their bodies mature. Their brains (/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Whats-Going-On-in-the-Teenage-Brain.aspx) grow by leaps and bounds. Their emotional lives become more complex and independent.

These changes can feel scary for teens and challenging for their parents. Almost all teenagers will have some behavioral outbursts with their families during this period of life. But strong, ongoing relationships (/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Uncertain-Times.aspx) can help teens and their parents through bumpy times.

Everyday ways to be positive

Here are some ideas that may create positive experiences (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Family-Relationships-Video.aspx) for teens and parents.

Have meals together. Mealtime is when we check in with each other. This can be hard to do with busy schedules, but it is important. The routine offers a way for parents and kids to share (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/How-to-Communicate-with-a-Teenager.aspx) what is on their minds. It brings families closer. It creates trust and understanding to help guide children through the challenges of the teen years. A close relationship with your teen helps you set limits and keep them safe as they explore and grow more independent.

Talk with your teen. As teens develop their own sense of independence, it gets harder to find time to talk (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/14-Ways-to-Show-Your-Child-Love.aspx). Chat in the car together, when doing dishes together, or any time you have a chance. Remember that no matter how big their problems seem, what most teens want is love and support. When a parent tries to solve the problem, rather than simply listening (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/How-to-Communicate-with-a-Teenager.aspx), their teen can feel disrespected and push the parent away.

Help them connect with their families and communities. During these years, help your teen learn that their words and actions matter. Some teens learn this by playing in team sports (/English/news/Pages/AAP-Encourages-Organized-Sports.aspx) or being involved in creating music. Others may find connection through spiritual communities or from having more responsibilities at home. Connecting (/English/family-life/Community/Pages/Helping-Teens-Connect-With-Their-Community.aspx) with families and communities also helps keep teens safe from riskier activity.

Find time to have fun together! What do you both enjoy? Shooting hoops? Going shopping? Visiting new places in your area? Volunteering (/English/family-life/Community/Pages/Creating-Opportunities-for-Children-Teens-to-`bute.aspx) in your community? Take time to have fun (/English/ages-stages/toddler/fitness/Pages/Caution-

Children-at-Play.aspx) and enjoy each other's company. No one wants the attention of people they love to only be focused on what not to do. This is true for teenagers, too. Parents have a role in keeping teens safe and engaged. But relaxing together helps them feel loved and valued.

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Your pediatrician is here to help

If you are worried about your teenager's health, development, or behavior, call your pediatrician (/aces). Keep in mind that teenagers are developing their own sense of privacy. The pediatrician will usually want some time with your teen without you in the room. This way, they can talk about private (/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Information-for-Teens-What-You-Need-to-Know-About-Privacy.aspx) matters. When parenthood is challenging, talk with your pediatrician. He or she is ready to listen without judgment and with compassion.

Resources

- 4 Ways to Support Healthy Mental & Emotional Development (/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/healthy-mental-and-emotional-development-in-children-key-building-blocks.aspx)
- What's the Best Way to Discipline My Child? (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx)
- How to Practice Gratitude and Improve Your Family's Mental Health (/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/how-to-practice-gratitude.aspx)
- Self-Care for Teens: How Families Can Support Coping Skills (/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/healthy-self-care-for-teens-how-families-can-help.aspx)
- Teen Mental Health: How to Know When Your Child Needs Help (/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Mental-Health-and-Teens-Watch-for-Danger-Signs.aspx)

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