



RAISING COMPETENT TEENAGERS

A major challenge for parents of teenagers is knowing how to encourage them to make the most of their time at school. It is often difficult to know what teenagers will find interesting and rewarding, and what skills they will need to get a job. During this time, some conflict between parents and teenagers is normal, disagreements over discipline are inevitable, and parents have to develop their own approach to finding out what their children will do well at. This tip sheet provides some ideas on how to help teenagers develop the skills they need to become competent young adults.

PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER SCHOOL

Helping our children to do well at school so they can get a good job or go on to further studies after they leave school can be challenging.

This is harder when parents have fixed views about what they think is best for a teenager and do not listen to their teenager's goals and interests. Sometimes a teenager may not have a clear idea of what to do and parents can become frustrated at their apparent lack of motivation.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BALANCE PARENTS' AND TEENAGERS' GOALS?

It is important to balance parents' and teenagers' goals as difficulties can arise if they are not managed together. Goals that are set too high or too low can cause conflict. For example, parents who allow their teenager to disengage from school may find that both they and their teenager regret this later. On the other hand, parents who demand very high levels of commitment to study and high marks may create unnecessary anxiety, resentment and distress in their teenager.

Some parents discover that a child who has done quite well in primary school turns into a teenager with little interest in doing well at high school. Peer pressure and puberty can contribute to this.

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

The six key ingredients for teenagers becoming competent young adults are:

- developing self-discipline
- being a good problem solver
- establishing routines
- getting involved in school activities
- following school rules
- having supportive friends

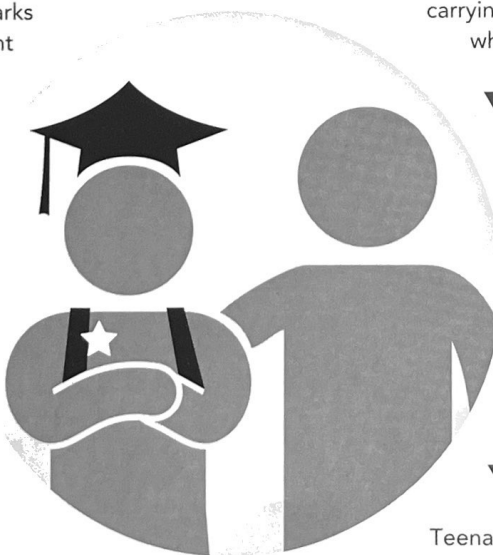
DEVELOPING SELF-DISCIPLINE

Self-discipline involves taking responsibility for making things happen. It also means not always relying on others to do things for us that we could do for ourselves.



It includes a teenager:

- being able to set personal goals, such as passing an exam
- keeping track of progress toward a goal and managing any changes that may be needed to achieve it, such as extra study
- relying less on others to help solve problems or overcome obstacles to reach the goal, such as expecting parents to remind them to study more
- becoming confident in their abilities to carry out the tasks necessary to reach the goal — this means believing in their ability to do what they set out to do
 - being able to self-evaluate or check how well they are carrying out those tasks, and making changes when needed



▼ Why is self-discipline important?

Developing self-discipline helps teenagers to become independent. Further study and many work situations also rely heavily on self-discipline.

Failure to develop good self-discipline is likely to result in not doing well in later study and at work.

▼ How to promote self-discipline in your teenager

Teenagers need to have the opportunity to make their own decisions. Parents can gradually hand over this responsibility, starting with less important issues and later allowing their teenager to make more important decisions. Offer your views, but encourage your



GETTING TEENAGERS CONNECTED

A major challenge for parents of teenagers is knowing how best to help teenagers become positively involved with groups and individuals in the wider community. It is often difficult to know what teenagers will find interesting and who they will get on with, and every parent has to develop their own approach in encouraging and supporting their teenager as they explore new relationships and activities. This tip sheet provides some ideas on how to help teenagers get connected.

WHAT IS GETTING CONNECTED?

As our children grow older, they spend more time away from home and get involved in activities that may be different from those enjoyed by their parents. This can be challenging for parents, particularly if they do not approve of the people or the activities their teenagers spend time with.

Teenagers today have more social and recreational opportunities than many of us ever had at the same age. Changes in technology have made it far easier for teenagers to contact each other using the Internet, social media and smart phones. Some parents are unsure about how to cope with these changes.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN TEENAGERS' ACTIVITIES?

During the early teenage years, parents can still influence what their teenagers do and who they spend time with. Showing an interest in what teenagers are doing, who they are with and where they are helps strengthen family relationships as long as it is done appropriately.

A challenge for many parents is getting the balance right. Restricting teenagers too much by not allowing them to decide for themselves what they will do and who they will do it with can lead to resentment and serious conflict. However, trusting the teenager's judgment completely can result in serious problems. Simply wishing and hoping that children will make appropriate friends and avoid temptation will not make it happen, particularly as peer pressure and puberty have an increasing impact during the teenage years.

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

The six key ingredients for teenagers becoming successfully connected in the wider community are:

- being confident
- being socially skilled
- planning ahead

- keeping commitments
- keeping in touch
- taking care of others



BEING CONFIDENT

▼ Why is being confident important?

Being confident promotes self-esteem and makes your teenager feel good about themselves and their abilities. This makes it easier for them to make friends and try new challenges. It also helps them to develop a clear sense of who they are and what they will and will not do. This helps to protect against being pressured by peers to participate in risky, illegal or other inappropriate behavior. It also promotes a positive approach to life that protects against depression and hopelessness.

▼ How to help your teenager become more confident

- Create a secure and predictable home environment where your teenager feels safe.
 - A healthy and varied diet and an active lifestyle ensure that your teenager is healthy and fit and feels good about themselves.
 - Encourage laughter and fun and provide your teenager with lots of appropriate affection. Some parents think that older children do not want or need their parents' affection. This is rarely true, but it can happen if parents embarrass their teenager in front of other people, particularly their peers. Look for ways to show affection that are appropriate to your teenager's age and preferences.
 - Acknowledge your teenager's efforts and accomplishments. Do not wait until they have finished something or until what they have done is perfect before commenting. There are lots of areas of your teenager's life where this could be done — their clothes or hair, their room, their involvement at school or their behavior with a sibling. Keep it brief but do it as often as you can.

