

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



April 2011

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## Be prepared to discuss values

During adolescence, teens develop the values that will guide them through life. It's a time of questioning—sometimes even questioning the values their parents have taught them. Remember, this is normal teen behavior. Just be sure to:

- **Be available.** One of the most important gifts you can give your teen is your willingness to listen. Let your teen feel that you are a safe place where he can talk about his thoughts and ask questions.
- **Be clear.** Tell your child what is important to you and why.
- **Ask questions.** "What makes you say that?" "Can you see the other side of that issue?"
- **Be a role model.** Your teen will be watching you. If you talk about healthy living, but still smoke, your teen is going to notice.
- **Decide which values** are too important for compromise. You are well within your rights to say you won't compromise on issues of safety and health. Then worry less about other issues where you don't feel so strongly. (Can you live with his decision to become a vegetarian? Could you tolerate a pierced nose?)
- **Remain calm.** Sometimes your teen is just testing your limits. Don't lose your cool when your teen's emotions run high.



Source: Harriet Heath, *Using Your Values to Raise Your Child to Be an Adult You Admire*, ISBN: 1-884-73436-7, Parenting Press.



## Reduce stress to increase attendance

Research has found that teens who experience stress at home are likely to have attendance problems and difficulty learning at school for up to two days following the stress. The study found that sources of stress for teens included:

- **Conflict** with parents.
- **Family** demands.
- **Problems** with homework.
- **Time** management issues.

Helping your teen learn how to deal with stress in a healthy manner can positively affect both her attendance

and her ability to learn in school. If your teen is experiencing stress, suggest that she:

- **Take a deep breath.** It sounds simple, but it works!
- **Work out.** Twenty to 30 minutes of exercise can relieve tension and clear your teen's head.
- **Keep a journal.** Some teens find that it's easier to write their feelings down.

Source: J. Warner, "Teen Stress at Home Lingers in School," WebMD Health News, [www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/news/20080514/teen-stress-at-home-lingers-in-school](http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/news/20080514/teen-stress-at-home-lingers-in-school).

## Share secrets of test success

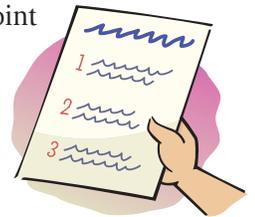
As end-of-year tests appear on the horizon, share these tips with your teen:

- **Cramming doesn't work.** It's impossible to review an entire year's biology notes in one night. Set aside time every day to review notes.
- **Read the directions carefully.** If the math test says "show your work," he needs to show his work. Sometimes, careless mistakes cause teens to lose points.

## Plan promotes good grades

You want your teen to get good grades. But getting angry about that D on her last report card isn't enough. Help her come up with a three-point plan that includes:

1. **Studying every day.**
2. **Turning in every assignment.**
3. **Attending every class.**



## Avoid 'spring fever'

It's April. Warm weather entices teens to spend more time outside. But reading is still important for your teen's success in school. To keep him reading:

- **Find** an outdoor reading spot. Set up a comfy chair and a glass of lemonade.
- **Read** on the go. Whether he's off to baseball practice or rehearsals for the spring play, your teen can find pockets of time to read.
- **Set up** a schedule for end-of-the-year book reports or projects. Get a big calendar. Have your teen assign himself reading goals for each day and check them off.





## How can parents handle fallout from 'senior pranks'?

**Q:** My daughter and some friends broke into the school and set off a fire alarm. This set off the sprinkler system and caused extensive damage to a science lab. The school wants the kids to pay for the damage. They also say that my daughter will get her diploma but she cannot "walk" at graduation. I think that's harsh for a prank. How can I make the school allow my daughter to take part in graduation?

**A:** Seniors love to pull pranks, but your daughter's vandalism went beyond youthful fun to dangerous and damaging. She broke into a school—a crime in most areas. She pulled a fire alarm—another illegal act. Her actions likely caused thousands of dollars of damage.

In many places, your daughter wouldn't be worried about whether she was "walking." She'd be worried about whether she'd have a criminal record.

I think you need to help your daughter realize that she is very fortunate. Her actions hurt the school and hurt other students. She needs to make amends.

Have her work out a plan to pay for her share of the damage. But also have her volunteer to do extra community service at the school. And on the day of graduation, plan a small family gathering. It won't be the same, but it will help her realize that actions have consequences. Think of it as the last important lesson she'll learn in high school.



## Know the federal laws about teens and jobs

Many teens work at part-time jobs to help their families and to gain valuable work experience. But, did you know that teens under 16 cannot work before 7:00 a.m. or after 7:00 p.m. during the school year? They are also prohibited from working jobs that are considered hazardous. For more information on teen labor laws check with your teen's counselor or go the Department of Labor website at [www.youthrules.dol.gov/index.htm](http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/index.htm).

Source: "What Hours Can Youth Work?" Department of Labor, [www.youthrules.dol.gov/hours.htm](http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/hours.htm).

## When parents stand back, teens build responsibility

Many parents want to solve all problems for their teens. That doesn't help them grow to be strong adults. For many problems, your role is to listen to your child, to suggest some alternatives, and to help *only* if your teen asks you to step in. Let him figure out a solution on his own.

## Questioning illustrations improves comprehension

The pictures, charts and graphs in textbooks can help your teen comprehend textbook information. So have your teen ask herself:

- **Why** is this picture here? How does it illustrate the text?
- **What** details are important in the picture? Are those details highlighted in the text?
- **How** will remembering this picture help me remember what I read in the chapter?



Source: William N. Bender, *Differentiating Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities*, ISBN: 0-761-94517-2, Corwin Press.



## Are you in control of screen time?

April 20-26 is TV Turnoff Week. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen "unplug":

\_\_\_ 1. **Have you removed** the TV from your teen's room, if one was there?

\_\_\_ 2. **Do you try** to be a good role model by turning off the TV after you watch a program?

\_\_\_ 3. **Do you turn off** the TV during mealtime so you can talk as a family?

\_\_\_ 4. **Do you make** it easy for everyone in the family to do things other than watch TV? Do you keep books and magazines handy or take a walk together?

\_\_\_ 5. **Will you try** to turn the TV off for at least a day if you can't turn it off for a whole week?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer means you're helping your teen unplug from too much TV. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"I could have been a doctor, but there were too many good shows on TV."  
—Jason Love

## Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1527-103x