

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

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BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Teens can monitor themselves

Your son's teacher called to tell you he's causing problems in class. In addition, he isn't completing his assignments on time. You try grounding him, but it doesn't work. What can you do?

Make your teen responsible. He's old enough to understand what is expected of him and to work toward positive goals.

Schedule an appointment with the teacher. Ask her to draw up a list of two or three positive behaviors she would like to see. Be sure she is specific.

Then create a chart with five rows and six columns. Write the behaviors she identified in boxes down the left column. Write the days of the week across the top. Each day, have your son give himself a check if he exhibits positive behavior. At the end of the day, his teacher should look over his sheet. If she agrees with his tally, she signs it. Otherwise, she can jot a note, "Nate interrupted class by talking twice today."

Offer an incentive (such as a special outing with you) for getting checks for the week. And make sure your son knows you and his teacher are working as a team. Together you can improve his behavior—a change that is sure to contribute to his academic success.

Source: William Jenson, Ginger Rhode and H. Kenton Reavis, *Tough Kid*, ISBN: 1-570-35000-0 (Sopris West Publishers, www.sopriswest.com).



YOUR TEEN AND YOU

Family meals work holiday wonders

Families today tend to be busy—and during the holiday season those activities can get out of hand. To counteract this trend, make time for one daily meal as a family.

Research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that kids who ate dinner with their families five or more nights a week were also twice as likely to get

all A's. They were also less likely to try cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana.

If you can't schedule five dinners a week, start with one or two. Turn off the TV and the phone. Spend time talking and listening to each other. You'll be amazed—taking time for a family meal really does make a difference in your teen's life.

Source: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "Family Matters: Substance Abuse and the American Family," www.casacolumbia.org/Absolutenm/articlefiles/380-family_matters_report.pdf.

NEXT STEPS

College funding aid at hand

A college education can prepare your teen for the job of her dreams. But how can you pay for it? To find help:

- **Attend** any financial aid workshops provided by her school.
- **Talk** with her school counselor.
- **Check** out federal student aid at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

ENCOURAGING READING

Gift of reading best of all

During this holiday season, give your teen a gift card to a bookstore.

Go together to browse and talk about books. Then let your teen choose his own reading material. If you're watching your budget, look for a store that sells used books.



SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

After-school priorities worth discussing now

Take time this month to talk with your teen about her after-school schedule. Does homework come first? If a part-time job, membership in a school club or participation in a team sport interferes with her academic success, then it's time for her to cut back. Consider a change if you notice:

- **Her grades have gone down.**
- **She is always tired.**
- **She is often stressed.**

Be straightforward. Say, "I think you're too involved in extracurricular activities." Then help her reevaluate how she spends her after-school time. Work together to decide which activity needs to go.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How old is too old for teens to stay with a babysitter?

Q: Our sixteen-year-old daughter says she is just too old for a babysitter. She wants to stay home alone while we go out of town for the week. She is usually very responsible. Should we say yes?

A: No. Your daughter probably is very responsible. But in today's world, there are just too many things that can go wrong.

You've heard stories of innocent teens who invite a few friends over when they're home alone. The word gets out and before they know it, they have a houseful of kids they don't know. It could happen to your daughter.

That doesn't mean you can never leave home until your daughter goes to college. To make sure she has the supervision she needs, you could:

- **Arrange for her to stay with a friend.** It should be someone you know, who shares your basic ideas about rules and curfews. If you have family nearby, your daughter could also stay with them.
- **See if an older person could stay with her.** It could be an aunt or a grandparent. If your teen is a member of a youth group, consider asking the advisor to recommend someone.

And make sure she knows you expect her to keep up with her schoolwork while you are away.



PARENT QUIZ

Is anger out of control at your house?

Anger is a normal emotion. But left uncontrolled, it can destroy the relationship between parents and teens. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're letting anger spiral out of control:

- ___ **1. Have you tried** to help your teen find ways to handle anger (like getting exercise)?
- ___ **2. Do you try** to model positive ways of handling anger?
- ___ **3. Does your teen know** that in your family, physical violence is never acceptable?
- ___ **4. Do you take** a "time out" if you're very angry? Do you encourage your teen to do the same?
- ___ **5. Do you try** to listen more than you talk, especially when you're upset?

How did you do? Each *yes* means you are doing a good job of keeping anger under control. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea.

"No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched."

—George Jean Nathan

Teens want clear-cut values

Do teens want strong values? Yes, according to a Gallup survey. When teens listed what should be taught in public schools, they said respect and fairness. Next came acceptance and the "ability to follow through." Teens also said parents expect good manners—but that adults often don't model them.

Source: George and Alec Gallup, "Survey Answers Criticism of Those Who Ask: 'Whose Values Should be Taught in Schools?'" and "Surprise to Parents? Teens Value Courtesy," *YouthViews*, The Newsletter of the Gallup Youth Survey, Volume 7, Number 10, The George H. Gallup International Institute.

DEALING WITH TOUGH ISSUES

Parents should know what 'pharming' is

Teen abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications is a growing problem. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America states that nearly one in five teens has tried prescription medication to get high. It's called "pharming." Tell your teen that taking someone else's medication can be just as dangerous as taking illegal drugs.

Source: "Generation RX: National Study Confirms Abuse of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs," The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, www.drugfree.org/Parent/Resources/Generation_Rx_Study_Confirms_Abuse_of_Prescription.

AFTER SCHOOL

Have you met the parents of your teen's friends?

Friends play a huge role in the lives of high school students. Do you know the parents of your teen's friends? You can meet them:

- **At sporting events** and other school programs.
- **When you volunteer** for a school committee.
- **When you give** their child a ride home.



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