



## **RAISING TEENS & 20 PARENTING TIPS**

- 1.** Give kids some leeway. Giving teens a chance to establish their own identity, giving them more independence, is essential to helping them establish their own place in the world. However, there is a limit though - going out with the [wrong crowd](#) is a whole other thing.
- 2.** Choose your battles wisely. If your teen is doing something that is harmful to themselves or others - like getting a tattoo - then it is time to intervene. If it is purple hair or a messy room - it is not worth it. Don't nitpick.
- 3.** Invite their friends for dinner. It helps to meet kids you have questions about. That way you are not flat-out rejecting them and you can see how they are behaving around your children.
- 4.** Decide [rules](#) and [discipline](#) in advance. If it's a two-parent family, it's important for parents to have their own discussion, so they can come to some kind of agreement, so parents are on the same page. Whether you ban them from driving for a week or a month, whether you ground them for a week, cut back on their allowance or Internet use -- whatever -- set it in advance. If the kid says it isn't fair, then you have to agree on what is fair punishment. Then, follow through with the consequences.
- 5.** Discuss 'checking in'. Give teens age-appropriate autonomy, especially if they behave appropriately. But you need to know where they are. That's part of responsible parenting. If it feels necessary, require them to call you during the evening, to check in. But that depends on the teen, how responsible they have been.
- 6.** Talk to teens about risks. Whether it's drugs, driving, or premarital sex, your kids need to know the worst that could happen.
- 7.** Give teens a game plan. Tell them: "If the only option is getting into a car with a [drunk driver](#), call me -- I don't care if it's 3 in the morning." Or make sure they have cab fare. Help them figure out how to handle a potentially unsafe situation, yet save face. Brainstorm with them. Come up with a solution that feels comfortable for that child.
- 8.** Keep the door open. Don't interrogate, but act interested. Share a few tidbits about your own day; ask about theirs. How was the concert? How was the date? How was your day? Another good line: "You may not feel like talking about what happened right now. I know what that's like. But if you feel like talking about it later, you come to me."
- 9.** Let kids feel guilty. Feeling good about yourself is healthy. But people should feel bad if they have hurt someone or done something wrong. Kids need to feel bad sometimes. Guilt is a healthy emotion. When kids have done something wrong, we hope they feel bad, we hope they feel guilty.

10. Be a role model. Your actions -- even more than your words -- are critical in helping teens adopt good moral and ethical standards. If they have a good role model from early on, they will be less likely to make bad decisions in their rebellious teen years.
11. Use questions sparingly. Resist the urge to know EVERYTHING your teen is thinking or planning. Show some trust; you would expect the same.
12. Try not to be defensive. When they make generalizations or critical remarks, don't take them personally. They are opportunities for discussion.
13. Give straight forward advice on important issues such as sex, drinking and drugs, but don't keep repeating it. They need to hear you and they do hear you, even if they pretend indifference.
14. Talk about yourself sometimes, don't always just focus on the teen. They hate to be the only topic under discussion. Tell them about your own teen memories and mistakes.
15. Set up and use family meetings to full advantage. Get input from each person on rules, curfews, etc. as well as on the consequences of breaking rules. Sign agreements, try them out; modify as needed.
16. Show intimacy. Teens are still kids inside; they need the warm feelings of belonging that come from good touches and hugs.
17. Give lots of praise and positive feedback. Teens need to hear the "good stuff" just like the rest of us. They need to know you love them for who they are inside, as well as what they can do.
18. Give them responsibilities with every privilege; that's real life.
19. Teach them to make decisions and make them accept the consequences of each choice they make.
20. Teach them to deal with information. Teach them to think critically about what they see or hear, as well as how to sort out and prioritize information

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