

# The 5 Basics of Parenting Adolescents

Adapted from “Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action”

## LOVE AND CONNECT

Teens need a connection with their parents. Continue to support and accept your teen as she/he gets older and more mature.

### Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Say good things about your teen when he or she does something well.
- ◆ Enjoy the good times you spend with your teen.
- ◆ Your teen will challenge your point of view. Discuss your ideas with your teen. It's OK to have a difference in opinion.
- ◆ Spend time just listening to what your teen is feeling, thinking, and experiencing.
- ◆ Treat each teen as a unique individual.
- ◆ Encourage your teen to build his or her interests, strengths, and talents.
- ◆ Provide meaningful roles for your teen in the family.
- ◆ Spend time together one-on-one and as a family.

**Key Message for Parents:**  
Their world is changing. Make sure your love doesn't.

## MONITOR AND OBSERVE

Teens need parents to know what is going on in their lives. Be aware of what they are doing in school and after school. Let them know you are aware of their activities. Find out what is going on by talking, not by constantly watching your teen.

### Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Know where your teen is and what he or she is doing. Listen, observe, and talk with other adults who know your teen.
- ◆ Keep in touch with the other adults in your teen's life. They will let you know how he or she is doing when you are not there. Ask to know the good and the bad.
- ◆ Involve yourself in school events.
- ◆ Stay on top of information about your teen's classes, grades, job, and interests.
- ◆ Learn and watch for warning signs of physical and mental health problems.
- ◆ Ask for advice if you notice any warning signs.
- ◆ Be aware of the relationships your teen has in and outside of the home.
- ◆ Encourage your teen to challenge him or herself.

### Key Message for Parents:

Pay attention to your teen's activities. Your involvement matters.

## GUIDE AND LIMIT

Teens need parents to set clear limits. These limits should protect your teen from unsafe situations and give him/her room to grow and mature.

### Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Keep two kinds of “house rules.” The rules around safety cannot be argued. The rules around household tasks and schedules can be discussed.
- ◆ Have clear expectations that are high and also reasonable.
- ◆ Stand firm on the important issues such as safety and let go of the smaller issues.
- ◆ Help teens make better choices by teaching them, rather than punishing them.
- ◆ Enforce rules without hurting your teen's body or feelings.
- ◆ Give your teen more duties and more choices as they grow into adults.

### Key Message for Parents:

Remember to be both firm and flexible.

# The 5 Basics of Parenting Adolescents (continued)

## MODEL AND CONSULT

*Teens need parents to help them make good choices and guide them while they grow into adults. Talk to your teen, support him or her, and teach by example!*

### Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Set a good example by behaving the way you want your teens to behave.
- ◆ Share your opinions with your teen.
- ◆ Model the kind of relationships that you would like your teen to have.
- ◆ Give teens truthful answers when they ask questions. Keep in mind their level of understanding.
- ◆ Take pride in your family customs. Share your family's culture and history with your teen.
- ◆ Support your teen's positive school and work habits and interests.
- ◆ Help teens plan for their future and talk about their options.
- ◆ Give teens the chance to solve their own problems and make decisions.

**Key Message for Parents:**  
Be a good example for your teen.

## PROVIDE AND ADVOCATE

*Teens need parents to give them healthy food, clothing, shelter, and health care. They also need a caring home and loving adults in their lives.*

### Key Message for Parents:

Trust your teen while guiding her or him to better choices.

### Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Meet with people in your neighborhood, schools, and local groups.
- ◆ Locate the best schools and youth programs for your teen.
- ◆ Choose the safest neighborhood you can for your teen.
- ◆ Make sure your teen gets yearly health check-ups and the mental health care he or she needs.
- ◆ Find people and local groups that will help you be a better parent.



## RESOURCES

- ◆ **Positive Parenting. KidsHealth for Parents:**  
[www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive)  
Articles in English and Spanish.
- ◆ **Parenting. About Our Kids:**  
[www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles\\_parenting.html](http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles_parenting.html)  
Articles in English and some in Spanish, Chinese & Korean.

*Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing [feedback@ahwg.net](mailto:feedback@ahwg.net) or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.*

<sup>1</sup> Simpson AR. Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action. Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health. 2001, <http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/rpteens.html>. Adapted with permission.