

12 IDEAS FOR PARENTING TEENS

Your teen will likely act out at times. Some will test you more than others. Your parenting will have to adapt to their changing needs and maturity and sometimes you may feel overwhelmed.

Here are 12 suggestions that can help as you and your teen develop together.

1) Take care of your own needs. Looking after your own stress will help you be a calmer and more consistent parent. Ask for help when you need it.

- Try harder to not sweat the small stuff (see suggestion #6 below). Let go of needing to be a perfect parent. No one is.
- It may not always feel that you are making a difference in the life of your teen—but you are. Get support and hugs from others when you need it.
- Join a support group if you are having a tough time. You will not feel so alone. Parents Together (604 325-0556) is a good place to start.

2) Be affectionate (verbally and physically) with your teen, however not in front of friends. Teens embarrass easily and hate to have too much attention placed on them.

3) Stay actively involved in their lives; participate in school programs, get to know their friends and their friend's parents, show up at their games, school plays etc. Invite their friends to your home when you can. You cannot shadow your teens but letting them know you care is important.

4) Work *with* your teen to establish rules and boundaries. Negotiate more freedom as your teen shows more maturity and responsibility. As your teen grows, their ability to reason improves dramatically and you will be challenged if what you say does not make sense.

5) Give them some space and privacy. Violate their privacy and you risk a real breakdown in communication. Avoid eavesdropping on the phone, reading their journals, etc.

6) Decide what you can let go of and what you can't. Does it really matter what your teen wears? (His/her style will probably change next month anyway.) Can you live with a messy bedroom if the rest of the house is tidy? Try not to nag about everything – keep your rules and boundaries for the big stuff!

7) Don't expect your teen to be consistent. The adolescent is a between-ager. Not quite a child and not yet an adult.

8) Keep the conversation going. If your teen is non-verbal keep the topics neutral. Talk to your teen as if he was another person's child. Be interested and curious about their thoughts and opinions about the world. If his/her values differ from yours, don't panic. They are at the stage where they are trying on new attitudes to see how they feel. Allowing the conversation to happen and showing respect for their view builds trust.
Listen well: that is why we were born with two ears and just one mouth.

9) Let them come to you when they need support. Be open and honest with your feelings and thoughts—they're older and will respect some honest communication. You can model respectful ways to share feelings and thoughts.

10) Help them work through their choices and when they make mistakes, work with them to figure out what to do differently next time.

11) Hold on to your sense of humour. Celebrate your teen's growth as if they were little again. They are going to fall down as they learn to walk in the world of adults—let them.

12) Be patient with them and yourself. Continue to challenge your teens to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Do not rescue or excuse irresponsible behaviour. We need to set reasonable boundaries to guide them to make good choices for themselves.