

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Sleep is crucial for health, concentration and learning

Many high school students think they can pay sufficient attention in class without getting a full night's sleep. However, a lack of sleep reduces students' ability to learn, listen, concentrate and solve problems.

Share these research-based facts with your teen:

- **Teens need** 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night to function well the next day. Only 15 percent of teens report getting 8.5 hours of sleep each night.
- **A consistent sleep schedule** makes waking up easier. Your teen may be tempted to sleep until noon on weekends, but that shift only makes waking up more difficult on Monday morning.
- **A lack of sleep** causes many teens to feel depressed and stressed.
- **Nothing replaces sleep.** Vitamins, pills and drinks with caffeine are not substitutes for a night of restful sleep.
- **Sleep deprivation** causes the same impairment as having a blood alcohol content of .08 percent. This means that driving while sleepy is dangerous.
- **Using technology**, eating, drinking and exercising in the hours right before bedtime makes it harder to sleep. Suggest quiet, calm activities that will relax your teen's brain, such as reading a book. Taking a warm bath or shower right before bedtime can help your teen's body relax and get into sleep mode.

Source: E. Suni, "Teens and Sleep," Sleep Foundation, OneCare Media, LLC.

Boost school success with gratitude



Feeling grateful can help students experience a boost in academic interest, grades and extracurricular involvement.

Suggest that your teen keep a gratitude journal. This will provide a permanent record of the many positive things in your teen's life—and reinforce writing skills at the same time.

To reap the most benefit, your teen should write in the journal at least once a week. Students can write about:

- **A relationship** that helped them grow.
- **An opportunity** that they had recently.
- **Something great** that happened to them or a friend.
- **A personal attribute** they are glad they have.

The gratitude journal can also serve as a source of inspiration for personal growth. For example, a student who is grateful for having a funny history teacher may begin looking for humor in other learning experiences.

Source: E. DeRoche, "Gratitude: At Work, Home and School," Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools.

Model communication skills during disputes with your teen



Sometimes, life with a teen can seem like a courtroom drama. You say something and your teen argues back.

But arguments aren't necessarily bad.

According to child development researchers, it's not *whether* teens argue with parents (because nearly all do). It's the *way* that kids and parents disagree that's important.

You don't have to back down when your high schooler disagrees. Just listen to what your teen has to say. If your teen makes a valid point, acknowledge it. Perhaps you can come to a mutual decision. Your teen will learn from your example.

Teens who listen to others and make their points respectfully have learned to communicate effectively. They are also

better equipped to resist peer pressure. One study found that these teens were 40 percent more likely to say *no* to a friend offering drugs or alcohol.

Communication skills are vital in school. Students will get more out of class discussions if they can make their point, listen to others and find a rational solution.

Source: J.P. Allen and others, "Predictors of Susceptibility to Peer Influence Regarding Substance Use in Adolescence," *Child Development*, Society for Research in Child Development.

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."

—Epictetus

Create a home environment that supports your teen's learning



Reinforcing learning can be tricky when you have a high school student. Many families worry that they don't

know enough about certain high school subjects to reinforce what their teens are learning in them.

However, what is really important is simply to create a family life that values learning and makes it possible. Here's how:

- **Talk about the jobs** people hold whenever you visit a business with your teen. Discuss the education needed for such a job, but keep the conversation casual.
- **Encourage your teen** to research and explore. For example, ask your teen to help you figure out where

to get a service you need or to find a new place for your family to visit.

- **Say that you are interested** in hearing about anything new your teen learns at school. Ask your teen to explain some concepts to you.
- **Plan family projects** that involve learning skills, such as painting a wall or cooking a special meal, that you and your teen can do together.
- **Encourage your teen's talents**, even if they are not what you would have picked. Say that you respect what your teen can do. Remember, these talents may become the foundation for her future career.
- **Ask for your teen's opinions** on everything. Say that you value your teen's opinion—whether you agree with it or not.

Are you helping your teen get needed help?



The end of the year is near—but there is still time for students who are struggling to get help.

Are you doing all you can to identify problems and support your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___ **1. Do you recognize** the warning signs (failing grades, missed classes) that your teen may be having academic difficulties?

___ **2. Have you helped** your teen identify the possible causes of a problem: not doing assignments, not listening to the teacher, not understanding the assignment?

___ **3. Have you told** your teen that it's a sign of strength to ask for help when it's needed?

___ **4. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk to teachers or a counselor about help available at the school?

___ **5. Have you looked** into other resources if your teen needs more help than the school can provide?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your teen get the support to turn things around. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Six ways your teen can celebrate Earth Day and make a difference



Earth Day is a great opportunity for teens to learn more about environmental issues and take action to make a difference. Here are some educational ways your teen can participate:

1. Research an environmental issue.

Have your teen choose a topic and research the causes, effects and potential solutions. For example, your teen could research climate change, pollution or deforestation. Encourage your teen to present the findings at a family dinner.

2. Organize a local clean-up event.

Your teen could gather friends and family to clean up a nearby park, beach or neighborhood.

3. Reduce your carbon footprint.

Your teen could brainstorm ways your family could reduce energy

consumption, minimize waste and choose sustainable products.

4. Advocate for the environment.

Suggest volunteering at a local environmental organization. Have your teen search online to find groups in your town.

5. Become an advocate.

Your teen could write local representatives about environmental issues and advocate for policy changes.

6. Explore careers.

Challenge your teen to learn about career opportunities in environmental science, conservation and sustainability. Perhaps your teen could shadow a professional in the field to gain insights and experience.

By participating in these activities, your teen can learn about environmental issues, take action to make a difference and inspire others to protect the Earth.

Q: My tenth grader's anxiety has me worried. My teen worries about failing tests, which results in late night studying and poor test performance. Being popular is also a source of anxiety. On a group project earlier this school year, my teen did the work of four people —just to be liked. How can I help my teen relax and worry a little less?

Questions & Answers

A: The teen years can be tough. But it sounds like your student is making things harder than they need to be. Worrying about the future makes it more difficult to enjoy the present.

Here's how you can help:

- **Have a discussion.** Say you are concerned about your teen's stress and you want to help.
- **Foster your teen's** sense of proportion. Not everything has to be perfect. Talk about times when "good enough" really is just that.
- **Help your teen structure** study time. Starting several days in advance and studying a shorter time each day is more likely to lead to a better test score than cramming all night. Then, set—and enforce—a curfew.
- **Help your teen** avoid taking on too much responsibility the next time a group project rolls around. Agree to play the "heavy" so your teen can say, "Sorry—I can't do that part of the project. My mom says I have to help around the house this weekend."
- **Pay close attention** to your teen's behavior. Anxious teens sometimes self-medicate, so be alert for signs of drug or alcohol use.

Talk to your high schooler about ways to combat cyberbullying



Teens spend much of their time texting friends and reading posts on social media sites. Not surprisingly, these are

the channels that many bullies use to harass other students.

Studies show that 60 percent of students see frequent bullying online—and only 1 in 10 of the targeted teens will inform a trusted adult.

Whether it's a disrespectful comment posted on a photo or a rumor that's been reposted several times, cyberbullying can have a devastating effect on students' mental health and academic performance.

Teens play an important role in defeating cyberbullying. Teach your teen to:

- **Delete content** on social media that is mean-spirited or makes fun of others. Your teen should not share negative comments with friends. Bullying escalates when others help spread the message.
- **Unfollow or block users** who repeatedly post harmful or negative things about others.
- **Report bullying** to a trusted adult. Teens often operate under a code of silence. But telling an adult can help bring the situation to an end.
- **Stop and think** before posting something that could hurt someone.
- **Talk with other students.** Your teen should let friends know that bullying is uncool.

Source: "11 Facts About Cyber Bullying," DoSomething.org.

It Matters: Building Character

Help your teen give back to the community



Educators know that community service has significant academic benefits for students. It gives them an

opportunity to apply what they are learning to real human needs.

Volunteering also helps students gain valuable life experience and skills—which can put them on the path to their future careers.

While many people think about volunteering over the holidays, community service should be a year-round priority. Ask your teen to research and select an organization that your family can help.

As a family, you could:

- **Support an organization.** Some families give a monetary gift to a charity they support. But that isn't the only way to help. Find out if you can stuff envelopes for a group working on an issue your teen cares about. Could you organize a collection of canned goods for a food pantry? Perhaps you could help get the word out about a special cause on social media.
- **Prepare and serve a meal.** A local soup kitchen or homeless shelter may need volunteers to prepare, serve or deliver meals.
- **Become a pen pal.** Is there a nursing home nearby? Ask if there are any residents who do not receive regular mail.
- **Give a gift anonymously.** Perhaps your teen knows someone who is going through a rough time. Leaving a small plant or a batch of cookies at their doorstep could lift that person's spirits.

A seven-step process makes it easier to reinforce your values

Educators and families alike recognize the importance of instilling strong values in children. However, teaching values can sometimes feel challenging.

Try this seven-step process:

1. **Explain.** Talk about the values that matter to your family.
2. **Examine.** Look for news stories that describe key values in action.
3. **Exhibit.** If you want your teen to be honest, be honest yourself.
4. **Expect.** Say that you expect your teenager to respect your family's values, even if your teen's values differ.
5. **Experience.** Provide experiences where your teen can put the values you want to teach into practice.
6. **Encourage.** When your teen demonstrates one of your family's values, acknowledge it: "Thanks for being honest and showing me your English test grade."
7. **Evaluate.** Talk about times when it was hard to live up to your values. Together, brainstorm ways to handle similar situations.



Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues*, Touchstone Books.

Try these strategies to build your teenager's self-confidence



When students are confident in their abilities, they often do better in school because they believe they can accom-

plish goals and overcome problems.

To foster self-confidence, demonstrate belief in your teen's abilities.

Be sure to:

- **Give your teen chores** and other responsibilities at home.
- **Avoid unconstructive criticism.** Focus most of your attention on what your teen does well.
- **Let your teen make** as many decisions independently without risking safety.
- **Ask your teen to help a friend** or sibling with a task, such as an assignment. Helping another person will give your teen a sense of pride.
- **Notice accomplishments.** Your teen earned a B on a recent science test, but really wanted an A. Say, "Earning a B means you mastered a majority of the material. I'm proud of all you have learned!"