

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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*still make the difference!*



## Encourage your teen to stay in school by managing stress

**S**tudents who drop out of school limit their life choices forever. But every year, many teens make this destructive choice.

A Canadian study looked at teens who faced big challenges. All were low-income. Most had low grades. But only some of the students dropped out. What made the difference?

The study found that dropping out of school isn't always related to an issue in school. Often, a difficult life event or problem at home—death, divorce, health or legal problems, or even a move—can tip the scales and lead teens to drop out.

Adults can't control all of the stress that happens in their teens' lives. But they can recognize it and find effective ways to help them cope. Teens are often moody, but paying attention to

a major change, such as suddenly losing interest in old friends and things they used to enjoy, is vital.

If you notice signs of stress:

- **Encourage your teen** to take a break. Sometimes just listening to music or watching an old movie can offer some stress relief.
- **Discourage negative self-talk.** Teens under stress sometimes think that nothing will ever change. Help your teen see that even small changes can make a difference.
- **Help your teen** break big challenges into smaller parts. A project can seem overwhelming. So find one small thing your teen can finish today.

Source: V. Dupéré and others, "High School Dropout in Proximal Context: The Triggering Role of Stressful Life Events," *Child Development*, Society for Research in Child Development, Inc.

## Responsibility prepares teens for adulthood



Teens are basically in training for adulthood. Assuming more responsibility for themselves is the

way they get there.

To promote responsibility, encourage your teen to:

- **Use a calendar** to manage time. Seeing school deadlines alongside other responsibilities helps teens plan when to accomplish everything.
- **Schedule appointments.** This gives teens more control over their schedules and lets them practice valuable social skills.
- **Set a budget** and stick to it. Teens may have spending money from an allowance or a part-time job. A budget helps them pay attention to their spending—and see that adding to savings can be rewarding.
- **Plan a family project.** Teens can research the steps to take and come up with a budget.
- **Read the news.** Learning about the issues world leaders deal with helps teens see that their responsibilities (such as studying for that history test) aren't that bad!

## Use the media to teach your teen about consequences



High schoolers don't always take the time to consider the consequences of their actions.

So it's important for adults to help them learn how to plan ahead. That's where the media can be extremely helpful.

Look for stories that highlight poor life choices. You probably won't have to look far. When you come across a news item about a student, celebrity or politician getting into trouble, raise the topic with your teen. Then, have a discussion.

Ask questions like:

- **What was this person** doing that led to this negative consequence?
- **What might have happened** if the person had made different choices?

- **How will this event** affect the person's future?
- **How will others** be affected by this person's mistakes?

Talking about other people's poor decisions offers distance—and some perspective. It's a great way for your high schooler to think about consequences *before* a challenging situation arises.

**“Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.”**

—Margaret J. Wheatley

## Studying a foreign language has many benefits for students



Many high school students consider foreign language courses only as something they are required take to earn a

diploma. Help your teen see the many other benefits of learning to speak another language.

Learning a foreign language:

- **Helps students improve skills** in their native language. For English-speaking students, a new language can sharpen vocabulary, grammar and writing skills.
- **Improves students' memory** and gives them practice in speaking and listening.
- **Prepares students** for the world outside of school. A new language exposes them to another culture and its traditions. Knowing another

language also opens the door to more career options.

To support your student's efforts in a foreign language course:

- **Ask your teen to teach you** a few simple phrases. Use them around the house.
- **Stay involved in assignments.** Ask how your teen is doing in class at least once week.
- **Look for news** and TV stories about the countries whose language your teen is studying.
- **Search online** for videos, music and books in that language. Your teen look for materials at the library, too.
- **Look for festivals** and cultural events related to the language your teen is studying. Make plans to attend one together.

## Are you helping your teen avoid the senior slump?



Ask any teacher and you'll learn that “senior slump” affects many seniors. They don't want to study. They have a hard time

paying attention in class. In fact, many don't want to attend class at all!

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen avoid the senior slump:

\_\_\_ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about why it's important to keep grades up? Colleges can take back their offers of admission.

\_\_\_ **2. Are you making** sure your teen is attending all classes every day?

\_\_\_ **3. Have you planned** some fun senior activities with other families that will give your teen a reason to want to stay involved?

\_\_\_ **4. Are you helping** your teen find work experiences—such as interning and volunteering?

\_\_\_ **5. Are you spending** time together and remaining engaged in what your teen is learning?

### How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your teen stay focused during senior year. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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## Research reveals the importance of having a success mindset



The music teacher handed out a difficult new piece. But your teen wasn't worried. "I'll just practice until I get it."

Then later, the math teacher introduced a new math skill. Your teen thought, "I can't learn this. I'm no good in math."

The truth is that the same strategy your teen learns to master music is the one that will help your teen learn the difficult math problems. But many students often do not see the connection between practice and results in the classroom.

Researchers at Stanford conducted a study on motivation. They divided students into two groups. They praised one group for their *ability* ("You must be smart to get that right").

They praised the other group for their *effort* ("You really worked hard to figure that out").

Over time, students in the group praised for their ability backed off a challenge. But the teens praised for their work effort said, "Bring it on."

Make it clear that you believe your teen can learn and succeed with hard work. This is what researchers call the "success mindset." It's critical to helping students stay motivated to face—and overcome—challenges.

Thomas Edison is reported to have said, "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Share this formula for success with your teen!

*Source:* B. Goodwin, *Changing the Odds for Student Success: What Matters Most*, Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.

## Show your teen how to reduce careless errors by proofreading



Your high schooler just turned in a big research paper after spending weeks researching and writing—impressive,

right? Not if your teen turned it in without a second look.

Technology has come a long way in helping students with spelling and grammar, but spell-checking programs aren't perfect. If your teen types *their* instead of *they're*, the program may not notice anything is wrong—but the teacher will.

To improve writing and avoid careless errors, suggest your teen:

- **Include time for proofreading** when creating a schedule for completing a paper.
- **Slow down.** By slowing down when reading over written work,

your teen is more likely to catch errors. Our eyes tend to fill in missing letters or words. Your teen should also try reading it aloud. Often, the ear will catch what the eye skips over.

- **Proofread papers** more than once. Some students even read a paper from back to front so spelling errors are more likely to stand out.
- **Understand typical errors.** If your teen often misspells or misuses the words *effect* and *affect*, that is something to double-check before turning in an assignment.
- **Avoid becoming discouraged** by overlooked mistakes. Magazines and newspapers have many editors to proofread their copy, and they still make mistakes sometimes!

**Q:** My teen and I used to be close. But in the last few months, I feel like we are strangers. My teen gets annoyed and makes a face when I ask about school or anything else. I want to be involved, but my teen only wants to argue with me. What should I do?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** You are smart to want to stay involved in your teenager's life. Experts agree that family engagement has a positive effect on teens' overall happiness and school success. And there is no need to panic.

Your teen is going through a normal phase—and has been through a similar phase before. Remember the toddler years? Back then your child shouted *no* and threw tantrums. Now your teen makes faces and argues.

It's the same basic behavior. And the things you did when your child was a toddler will, with some adjusting, also work now:

- **Don't take it personally.** Your teen is trying to carve out a new, independent life. Your student still needs you, but is not likely to admit it. So ignore as much as you can. Stay calm. Don't respond to anger with anger.
- **Set limits.** Family rules should always apply—such as no insults and no yelling. Say that you will listen when your teen speaks respectfully.
- **Emphasize that you will** always be there for your teen. If you were close before, chances are you'll be close again. Unless you suspect something is seriously wrong, for now, let your teen figure things out independently. Sooner or later, allowing your teen to grow will bring the two of you closer.



# It Matters: Test Success

## Taking better notes improves test performance



High school students know that they need to study to succeed on tests. But did you know that one of the most

effective ways students can improve their study skills is to strengthen their note-taking skills?

Taking detailed and complete notes not only promotes active learning, it also improves students' ability to recall the information presented in class accurately.

To get the most out of class notes, encourage your teen to:

- **Be concise.** Students shouldn't write down every word the teacher says. Instead, they should focus on recording the teacher's main points by listening for repetition and writing down vocabulary, formulas, dates and important facts. Students can also create a list of abbreviations to use for frequently-used words.
- **Use a standard format,** such as an outline. Using the same format helps students keep notes organized and can aid in recall.
- **Keep notes** in chronological order and use dividers for different subjects. Class notes are helpful if students can find them easily—and can figure out which notes go with which topic at hand.
- **Review notes** the day they are taken. Students are more likely to notice if anything was missed when the material is still fresh in their minds. Plus, daily reviewing will reinforce learning and eliminate the need to cram the night before the test.

## Teach your high school student this five-day study program

A simple study program can help high school students study for all kinds of tests—from history unit tests to math final exams. Encourage your teen to follow these steps:

- **Four days before the test,** gather everything that will be covered on the test. This includes class notes, outlines, quizzes and handouts. Arrange them by date.
- **Three days before the test,** read everything over. Make a list of facts likely to be on the test. Did the teacher spend four days going over the parts of a cell? Odds are, that will show up on test day. Make flash cards of facts to memorize, or create a quiz and practice recalling the information. Visit [quizlet.com](https://quizlet.com) for free online study tools.
- **Two days before the test,** look through assigned readings. What are the major headings? What are the most important topics? Make a list of essay questions that may show up on the test. Now, choose



several of these possible test questions and make notes of how to answer them.

- **One day before the test,** create and take a self-quiz. Try to recall and write memorized facts correctly. Apply math or science formulas by using them to solve sample problems.
- **The day of the test,** repeat the previous day's tasks. Collect and bring all allowed materials (notes, calculators, etc.) to class.

## A pre-test organizer keeps high school students organized



Organization is key for test success. It's hard for students to do well on a test if they don't know when the test is, what to study or what materials they need.

Encourage your teen to create a pre-test organizer and refer to it often. For upcoming tests, your teen should write down:

- **The class** the test is in.
- **The date** of the test.
- **The format** of the test—essay, fill-in-the-blanks, multiple choice, etc.
- **The topics** that the test will cover.
- **The relevant pages** in the assigned reading.
- **The materials needed** to study—textbook, class notes, past assignments and quizzes.