

# High School Parents

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*still make the difference!*



## Promote persistence for academic & personal success

Sometimes it seems easier to give up on a difficult assignment than to push through and complete it. However, that won't get your teen very far in life. Life is full of difficult jobs and tasks, so developing persistence is essential.

To encourage your teen to see challenges through to the end:

- **Notice progress.** Say things like, "You're really coming along with this project."
- **Recommend positive self-talk.** Saying things like, "I am going to do a great job on this," can help your teen through difficult tasks.
- **Be a role model.** If you've been putting off a big chore, decide to do it. Say, "Today, I am going to work on this until I finish. I know how great it will feel to get this off of my plate!" Then, actually do it.
- **Offer support.** Don't take over when your teen gets stuck. Instead, ask questions to help your teen get back on track.
- **Suggest taking breaks.** Taking a five-minute breather after completing a set of complicated math problems can restore your teen's energy to keep working.
- **Celebrate hard work.** When your teen finishes a challenging task, plan something fun to do together. You could watch a movie or cook a fun dinner.

Source: M. Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds and Caring Hearts*, Jossey-Bass.

## A positive outlook boosts teens' learning



A positive attitude can motivate your teen to be resilient and continue to strive. It also

improves your teen's overall well-being. To nurture positivity, encourage your teen to:

- **Be hopeful.** On many days, some things will go well and others won't. Rather than dwelling on what went wrong, help your teen focus on what went well.
- **Laugh.** Nothing is better than humor for getting rid of a negative attitude.
- **Move on.** Your teen didn't get picked for a certain team and the next chance to try out isn't until next year. After a day or two of disappointment, encourage your teen to regroup and try something else for the time being.
- **Seek opportunities.** If your teen wants to work with animals, suggest looking for ways to make it happen. Encourage your teen to call a few animal shelters and find out if they need help.

Source: B.A. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide to Building Character*, Free Spirit Publishing.

# Help your high schooler uncover hidden strengths and interests



High school gives teens lots of opportunities to learn more about themselves. To encourage the discovery of strengths

and interests, have your teen:

- **Read.** Reading a variety of material exposes your teen to new ideas and pursuits. Suggest your teen read anything and everything.
- **Talk to people about their jobs.** Your teen should ask what they like best about them. Do any of the jobs sound interesting? Your teen might also ask friends about their hobbies and interests.
- **Try new things.** The easiest way for teens to find out if they're good at something is simply to try it. Challenge your teen to join

a new organization or activity.

Suggest volunteering or signing up for a class online.

- **Research.** Suggest that your teen go online and search for hobbies and careers that seem interesting. By actively exploring different options and reflecting on experiences, your teen can uncover strengths and passions and identify possible career paths.

**“Don’t be afraid to wander. Sometimes, getting lost is the best way to find yourself.”**

—Paulo Coelho,  
The Alchemist

# Learning apps turn your teen’s phone into a school success tool



High schoolers use their phones to send text messages, post pictures, check social media and play games. Sometimes,

they even use them to call people.

Why not encourage your teen to use the phone as a learning aid? There are countless free apps that can help your teen:

- **Study a foreign language.** Many apps will help students in their foreign language courses. Some apps focus on vocabulary. Others help students learn challenging verb tenses. Suggest asking the teacher to recommend the best one for the language your teen is learning.
- **Graph math problems on the go.** In upper-level math classes, students often use graphing calculators to

solve problems. There are apps that will also do the job. Now your teen will be able to solve equations using a phone.

- **Read classic literature.** Your teen can browse classic books and novels online and then download titles for free to read on a phone.
- **Brush up on geography.** There are even apps that can help your teen become familiar with the countries around the world.
- **Improve focus and memory.** Suggest your teen to look for apps that offer riddles, puzzles and brain teasers.
- **Manage time.** From to-do lists to digital calendars, many apps can help your teen keep track of schoolwork, activities and other responsibilities.

# Are you boosting your teen’s civic responsibility?



Responsible students follow rules and respect others. They take care of their communities and also tend to achieve

in school. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are encouraging civic responsibility:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you discuss** rights and responsibilities with your teen? Teens always want to talk about their rights—but these come with responsibilities.
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you expect** your teen to be honest? Honesty is an important part of civil interaction.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you talk** about making the right choice even if it isn’t the most popular thing to do?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you discuss** current events and ask for your teen’s opinion about them?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you encourage** action when your teen is concerned about an issue? Your teen could write a letter to the editor or volunteer.

## How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you’re helping your teen become a community asset. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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# Show your teen how to prepare for different testing formats



The tests your high schooler takes will likely be longer and more complex than those in middle school.

They may also be in different formats—more essays and fewer multiple choice questions, for example.

Students need to study for all kinds of tests, but certain types of practice can help your teen do better with different types of questions. Share these strategies to help your teen prepare for:

- **Essay tests.** Your teen should create sample questions based on the main ideas in the material. Then, your teen should practice writing answers to these questions in paragraph form. Remind your

teen to write in clear, complete sentences and include factual details to support points.

- **Short-answer tests.** For fill in the blank and other short-answer questions, your teen needs to know facts. Memory techniques, such as making a mental picture of material may help. Chunking, which is learning facts in groups instead of one at a time, is also useful.
- **Problem-solving.** Students find these tests in math or science classes. To do well, your teen will need to know how to set up and solve the problem. Daily practice, even when there is no assigned homework, is the key to mastering these types of tests.

## Four strategies strengthen your teen's high-level thinking skills



According to a survey of college professors, many high school graduates are not prepared for the expectations they'll face

in college. A lack of high-level thinking skills is one of the reasons.

Of the instructors surveyed, 82 percent found that fewer than half of their students had the analytical thinking skills they needed to be successful.

To address this issue, high school teachers are focusing more on deeper learning and high-level thinking. This means your teen will not only be asked to recall a fact—but also to understand how that fact relates to other ideas.

To support your high school student's developing thinking skills:

1. **Challenge your teen to form** opinions and defend them. For

example, if your teen thinks there should be a stop sign in front of the school, suggest writing a letter to local authorities outlining the idea and the reasoning behind it.

2. **Help your teen see all sides** of an issue. Say, "I understand why *you* feel that way. But there are other people who might say ..."
3. **Explain the reasons** behind the limits you have set. For example, studies show that more teens are injured in car accidents after 9 pm. What a great reason to establish a driving curfew!
4. **Talk about the advertisements** when you're watching TV. How are they trying to persuade viewers? Are they effective?

Source: D. Schaffhauser, "Survey: Most Profs Find HS Grads Unready for College or Work," *Campus Technology*, 1105 Public Sector Media Group.

**Q:** My high schooler has disliked a few teachers before, but now there is one that seems especially hard for my teen to deal with. Everything my teen says about this teacher is negative. What should I do?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** When students are young, they usually adore their teachers. But as they get older, they may find there's a particular teacher they just don't like. That's especially true in middle and high school, where students have a different teacher for each subject.

You may be tempted to rush to your teen's defense. But many experts say the best thing you can do is to help your teen learn to deal with the situation independently. Here's how:

- **Acknowledge** your teen's feelings. Explain that it's OK not to like a teacher, but your teen needs to learn how to work with all types of people. Say you know your teen is capable of working things out.
- **Help your teen figure out** what is causing the problem. Ask questions like, "Do you have trouble understanding the content?" "Do you think the teacher is treating you differently than classmates?" As you listen, remember that you're only getting one side of the story.
- **Encourage action.** Once your teen is clear about the problem, suggest talking with the teacher. A quick meeting is sometimes all it takes to clear the air and find solutions.
- **Monitor.** Keep watching and listening. Are things improving? If not, it may be time for you to meet with your teen and the teacher.



# It Matters: Emotional Intelligence

## Help your teen develop conflict resolution skills



Whether it's a fight with a friend, a misunderstanding with a teacher or an argument with a family member,

all teens experience conflict in their everyday lives.

Help your teen express feelings in ways that lead to better relationships. Encourage your teen to:

- **Focus on the problem**, not the person. Your teen should avoid put-downs and name-calling. Demonstrate using "I messages" to explain how your teen feels about the situation instead of "you messages" that blame the other person.
- **Listen to the other side**. Your teen should hear the other person out and try to understand their point of view—even when disagreeing with it.
- **Think before acting** and try not to get defensive. Many times, a situation gets out of hand because people allow their emotions to control their actions.
- **Consider a compromise**. No one likes to lose. Your teen is more likely to resolve a conflict successfully by looking for a solution where everyone gives a little and gets a little, too.
- **Ask for help** when needed. Sometimes it takes a mediator to resolve a conflict. A coach or teacher may be able to help.
- **Stand up for the rights of others** who may have been wronged in the conflict.
- **Be willing to apologize**. Admitting mistakes is a sign of strength.

## Asking five questions helps teens make ethical decisions

Teenagers face many ethical dilemmas—from the temptation to cheat or lie to the urge to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Simply telling your teen to choose to do the right thing isn't enough.

A more effective strategy is to discuss how to approach ethical choices your teen might face. Have your student put any decision through this five-question test:

1. **Am I making this choice** with the hope that no one will find out?
2. **What will I think** about my choice in one month? In one year?
3. **How could my choice** affect others? Would I want them to do the same to me?
4. **If [someone I admire]** were in the same situation, what would that person do?



5. **If everyone did** what I'm about to do, would I want to live in the world shaped by that decision?
- When teens think through ethical dilemmas, they will be more likely to make the right choice in the moment.

## Teach your teen how to show respect at home and at school



Teens often use slang and joke around with their friends. And more often than not, they slip into this habit

when speaking to teachers or other adults—without realizing it may sound disrespectful.

Discuss the importance of being respectful to others at home and at school. Expect your teen to show respect through:

- **Tone and words**. Your teen should speak slowly, clearly and calmly. Teens should also address people properly by saying, "Good morning, Mr. Jones" or using their

titles, such as "Yes, Officer." And of course, saying *please* and *thank you* is always a great way to show respect.

- **Body language**. Smiling, nodding and making eye contact shows people that your teen respects them. Teens should also sit or stand up straight and avoid rolling their eyes.
- **Overall attitude**. Your teen should avoid interrupting others and remain calm—even when disagreeing with what someone is saying. Listening respectfully encourages the other person to listen when it's your teen's turn to speak.