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# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

*still make the difference!*



## Challenge your teen to find a 'mind-building' hobby

**A**s students get older, they must develop higher order thinking skills. High school students need to know how to weigh the information they hear, see and read.

To strengthen these thinking skills, encourage your teen to:

- **Read more than just assignments.** The more students read, the more new ideas they are exposed to. It can't be said too often that teens should read for pleasure—everything from news articles to magazines to novels.
- **Do puzzles.** Crossword puzzles build word power. Jigsaw puzzles improve logic.
- **Play board games.** Chess is a classic game for teaching analysis and strategy. Checkers, backgammon

and some popular brand name games, such as Scattergories and Catan, build important thinking skills, too.

- **Debate.** Most teens love to argue. Ask your teen to stop arguing with you and join the school debate team instead. No debate team? Perhaps your teen could start one.
- **Play a musical instrument.** Making music teaches about order, rhythm and patterns. It sharpens listening skills. And it can help teens feel calm, which improves their ability to think.
- **Start a blog or podcast.** Your teen will get practice planning and researching topics, creating and formatting content, and editing and publishing work.

## Show your teen what respect looks like



When it comes to teaching your high schooler about respect, the idea isn't to *teach* at all.

It's to demonstrate.

Here are some everyday ways to demonstrate respect:

- **Be polite.** Say *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your teen. Honor privacy by knocking before entering your teen's room.
- **Be fair.** Don't pass judgment on your teen or impose a consequence before learning all the facts. Show respect by taking the time to get your teen's side of the story.
- **Be kind.** Show grace when your teen makes a mistake. Avoid telling childhood stories that might embarrass your teen in front of others.
- **Be dependable.** If you tell your teen you'll do something, be sure you do it.
- **Be honest.** Every little white lie you tell chips away at the respect your teen feels—or doesn't feel—for you.
- **Be accountable.** Apologize when you make a mistake or hurt your teen's feelings.

# It's not too early to chart a course for graduation and beyond



Whether you have a freshman or a senior, there are lots of things your high school student can do to prepare to

graduate and move on to career training or college. Here's a partial list:

- **Freshman year**, encourage involvement in activities that are meaningful to your teen. Have your student tell the school counselor about goals for higher education. Explore financial aid, scholarships and ways to save money for tuition.
- **Sophomore year**, encourage your teen to research schools of interest and take virtual tours online. Make sure your student is taking challenging classes that meet high school graduation requirements.
- **Junior year**, your teen should take any college admission tests required

and make sure that the classes taken to meet high school graduation requirements will also meet college admission requirements. Colleges often require more.

- **Senior year**, your teen should begin applying to schools. Suggest posting the dates applications and financial aid forms are due. Be sure your teen fills out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form at [www.studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa](http://www.studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa).

**"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."**

—Eleanor Roosevelt

# Studies show it's important for teens to get enough sleep



Sleepy students have trouble learning, are less likely to be physically active and are more likely to feel

depressed. Research shows it's just as important to get a good night's rest after a day of learning as it is the night before a test—learning continues while your teen sleeps.

But high schoolers often have trouble getting enough sleep. Their natural rhythm is to sleep late in the morning and stay up later at night. They may struggle to wake up for classes that start early in the morning.

To wake up ready to learn:

- **Recommend a bedtime routine.** Make sure your teen goes to bed early enough to get at least eight hours of

sleep each night. Experts say dimming the lights at night and avoiding bright screens right before bedtime can make it easier for teens to fall asleep. Suggest relaxing activities to help your teen wind down, like taking a bath, listening to music, or reading.

- **Tell your teen** to avoid caffeine. Consuming caffeine a few hours before bedtime can reduce your teen's total sleep time by one hour.
- **Don't allow your teen** to sleep all weekend. Sleeping more than two hours past normal wake-up time will make it more difficult for your teen to wake up early again on Monday.
- **Suggest exercise.** Working out, running and other activities—at least a few hours before bedtime—will help your teen sleep soundly.

# Are you helping your shy teen find ways to cope?



Nearly everyone has felt shy at one time or another. But some teens seem to be shy in *any* new situation. They find

it hard to make friends and are afraid to speak up in class. Connecting with others can also be a challenge for lots of students.

Are you doing all you can to help your shy teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you take time to show** your love and appreciation for your teen?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you help your teen find** and get involved in activities with like-minded students?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** volunteer activities? Helping others makes teens feel good about themselves.

\_\_\_ **4. Do you help your teen** role-play social situations? Practice can help a teen build confidence.

\_\_\_ **5. Do you plan to talk** with teachers if shyness affects class participation?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you're helping your shy teen manage shyness and build social skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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# Help your high school student build healthy digital habits



Teenagers' online lives are complex, which means setting screen-time limits for them can be a challenge. One way to promote healthier digital habits is to teach your teen strategies for coping with and managing technology use.

Help your teen:

- **Understand why technology** is hard to resist. Explain that the brain's "reward center" is activated by a "like" on social media or reaching a new level in a game. Fear of missing out plays a role in the craving, too—a lot can happen in the digital world in just minutes, so teens feel the need to be constantly connected. Encourage your teen to turn off notifications and set specific times to check messages and posts.
- **Recognize that the digital world** can be harmful. Studies show that social media is associated with

depression, anxiety and lower academic achievement. Ask your teen, "How do you feel when you use social media?" If the answer is "lonely" or "stressed," or if technology is interfering with schoolwork, it's time to review habits and make changes. For example, your teen might make a point of getting together with friends in person more often.

- **Be purposeful about screen use.** Teens often reach for their phones because they're bored or uncomfortable. Help your teen recognize these situations and choose healthier alternatives like reading a book or exercise. Teens also use technology to procrastinate when it's time to do schoolwork, so have your teen set a timer when picking up a device. When it goes off, it's time to get to work.

Source: "Protecting Youth Mental Health," The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory.

# Talk to your teenager about the dangers of vaping and smoking



Manufacturers may claim that electronic cigarettes (also known as vapes) are less harmful than traditional cigarettes.

However, according to the Centers for Disease Control, they are associated with health risks and should never be used by kids or young adults.

E-cigarette users use the devices to inhale a heat-produced vapor—hence the term "vaping." Not all vaping devices look like cigarettes. Some look like pens. Others resemble flash drives. Because the variety of devices can be used in different ways, they pose varying risks.

Share these facts about vaping with your teen:

- **Teens who vape** face a much higher risk of severe COVID-19 than their peers who do not.
- **Teens who vape** are three times more likely to start smoking regular cigarettes than their peers who haven't tried e-cigarettes.
- **Two-thirds of teens** who use vape think they contain only flavoring. In reality, some vape liquids contain higher concentrations of nicotine than cigarettes.
- **Nicotine-use in adolescence** can damage the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control.

Source: "Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**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 last year, my teen did the work of four people—just to be liked. How can I help my high schooler 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.
- **Set some limits** on study time. Encourage your teen to take a break after every 30 minutes of studying. Say that getting a good night's sleep will 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.



# It Matters: Schoolwork

## Practice makes perfect when it comes to math



Math is one of the most useful classes your teen will take in school—and for some students, it's one of the most difficult.

Unfortunately, there's no single magic secret that will help students do well in math. It takes work—the best math students study every day.

Share these math success tips with your teen:

- **Avoid missing class.** Learning builds day by day—especially in math. If your teen has to miss class and falls behind, suggest asking for help right away.
- **Take class notes**—and review them each evening. Your teen should write down any questions and ask the teacher at the next class meeting.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions** during class. Your teen should speak up when confused about how to solve a problem. Others in the class may feel the same way.
- **Review past quizzes** and assignments. They'll help your teen remember the steps to take to solve each problem.
- **Complete schoolwork** every day and allow enough time. Your teen shouldn't wait until 30 minutes before the class to start an assignment.
- **Solve sample problems.** Your student can ask the teacher for sample tests or find some online.
- **Start a study group.** What your teen doesn't know might be something a friend can explain. Study group members should keep the focus on math, not socializing.

## Students benefit when they assess the quality of their work

Successful students understand the value of reviewing their schoolwork before turning it in. By taking an objective look at the quality of their own work, teens become independent learners who are more likely to earn better grades.

Here are seven questions your teen should ask *before* turning in a school assignment:

1. **Does this meet** the requirements my teacher laid out?
2. **Am I satisfied** with what I am turning in? Is it my best work?
3. **Have I given proper credit** to others whose work I used?
4. **Have I checked** for misspellings and careless errors?
5. **Which part** of this project am I most pleased with?
6. **Is there anything** that I can improve?
7. **What have I learned** from this assignment?



## Help your teenager overcome common schoolwork hurdles



Removing schoolwork hurdles does not mean doing assignments for your teen. Rather, it means offering support

so your teen can overcome them.

Is your high school student:

- **Not doing assignments**, or not turning them in? Let your teen know that completing assignments is a top priority. Suggest strategies to help your teen stay on top of assignments. Your teen could make a to-do list each day and check off completed work.
- **Not caring about schoolwork?** Provide some motivation. Connect what your teen is learning to future

goals. And remind your student that other activities will have to wait until schoolwork is finished.

- **Not understanding the work?** If your teen doesn't understand the directions or the assignment, suggest asking a classmate or the teacher for clarification.
- **Facing too much schoolwork**—or not enough? If your teen is doing well in the class, then the workload is probably about right. But if assignments consistently take all night, or if your teen is not doing well in the class but only seems to have a few minutes' worth of work each day, suggest talking to the teacher.