

Health and Wellness:

Parenting Teens

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No one ever said parenting would be easy. It's especially difficult being the parent who says no when "everyone else" is saying yes. To reduce everyone's stress and frustration about limits and expectations, four of the things to remember are: clarity, consistency, reasonableness, and evolution (i.e., being responsive to your child's changing developmental needs and what they've demonstrated about their choices).

Encourage positive behavior and make every attempt to limit opportunities for negative behavior. For instance, a teenager with a history of impulsive behavior should not be permitted to go to a party unsupervised. Rather, have friends come to your home instead. While there is no magic formula to guarantee good health, happiness and success for yourself much less your child(ren), here are some tips to point you in the right direction:

- Most everyone was given two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak;
- Respect that each child matures at their own pace;
- Each parent can demonstrate their own unique way to show their child how much they care;
- Find ways to spend time together and talk that fits your lifestyle;
- The medium that is used to communicate (i.e., phone, texting, email, et cetera) is far less important than how much each person listens;
- Learn to listen beyond the words because what your child is "saying" isn't always expressed into words. Look out for body language, tone and the overall picture;
- If "just talking" doesn't work for your family, add something else (e.g., shoot hoops, assemble a puzzle, go hiking, volunteer together) – essentially take turns doing something that's enjoyable; and
- Be patient to avoid saying something you'll regret.

You are encouraged to read and learn more about this topic for you and your family. There is a wealth of resources. Here are some links to get you started:

- (1) <http://parentingteens.about.com/>
- (2) <http://www.parentfurther.com/blog/how-to-communicate-with-teens>
- (3) <http://www.parentfurther.com/why/9-parenting-strategies>

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