

Living With a Teen

The transition from teen to adulthood takes place in stages. Each stage is a process of breaking away from Mom & Dad and trying out new behaviors on their own. Wanting more independence and freedom is a natural desire for teens. In fact, it is a necessary ingredient to growing up. In spite of this reality, the battle for independence and freedom often is a rough road for parents and teens. Some have suggested a few guidelines for managing this transition more smoothly:

- 1) Save your big guns for the major skirmishes.** Teens are notorious for picking battles on every front (especially ADD/ADHD teens). Be emotionally prepared to withstand the barrage by deciding ahead of time which issues are worth taking a stand over (grades, drugs, alcohol) and which issues are worth ignoring (make-up, clothes, T.V.)
- 2) Give them their space.** If home is a fun and safe place to be, they will view it as a refuge. Help them to feel they have personal space they can go to and bring friends to.
- 3) Loosen the reins.** This will help them mature and decrease the confrontation over their need to establish their own identities. Review their responsibilities and privileges with each birthday.
- 4) Share yourself– Talk with your teen.** Tell stories of your own teenage years when they are in the mood to listen (that usually is midnight or always a time when you are tired or busy... take the time whenever it is available). Don't lecture– anything past 10 words is lost and useless. Ask them about their lives– and spend the time listening.
- 5) Respect their opinion even if you don't agree with them.** Don't criticize. This is the first thing that will keep your teen from telling you thing sin the future... things you may need to know.
- 6) Be flexible. Say “yes” whenever you can.** “No's” will have more validity against the backdrop of frequent “yeses.”
- 7) Remember, you are their parent, not their best friend.** In the early teen years, kids don't want you to be their best friend. They want you to be a parent who will provide freedom within limits.
- 8) Lead by example.** How are you leading your life? What is your marriage like? What do you value? How good of a listener are you? Do you accept criticism and handle your anger appropriately? Are you available & loving to your teen? Your child will learn more from you by your actions than any of your words.