

The ABC's of Helping Your Child Through High School

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Actions Speak Louder than Words—Use this time with your teen as an opportunity to model your best behavior. They learn by watching you, what it means to be an adult and act responsibly.

Budgeting—Teach them how and give them increasing responsibility in managing money. This will help them reach their graduation more prepared than if they have no sense of what credit card debt or balancing a checkbook means. The school may teach about personal finance but you can provide the 'lab' experience.

Communication/Consistency—Your child is likely going to attend school in a way and manner that differs from your expectations. Keep communication open so that you can hear their concerns, issues and choices rather than forcing them to be secretive and take risks.

Don't be afraid to say "NO". Your teen needs you as a parent not another friend.

Encouragement—Find ways to encourage success for your student. Ask them to discuss what went well.

Freedom—Help them to understand that in your home the amount of freedom they get is related to the level of responsibility and trust they engender. With every privilege comes a responsibility

Go to school events, conferences, and athletic games. Although your child may say they don't want you there, your presence and involvement keep you informed about the school while meeting other parents and letting your child know you care.

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Humor—We all need lightness and laughter to get through the bad days and make the good ones better. **Hugs**—Although your teen may say they don't want hugs—find ways to show affection and caring.

Involvement in future choices-Junior year visits to colleges or future employers can really help your teen get a clearer picture of what they may want or not want for their future career path..

Justice- be fair even though you may have more power in the situation, try to make decisions in the fairest way possible.

Knowledge—There are many books, classes and radio shows on the topic of parenting. Check one out if you feel stuck.

Learn about what they are learning. Take an interest in their classwork and ask them questions about it, not just have they done their homework.

Meals together –the ritual of families sharing meals together has often been lost. Yet it is one of the most powerful ways of consistently connecting with your kids.

Network with other parents. Make connections with the parents of your teen's friends. Don't be shy about discussing supervision and other concerns.

Openness—Be as open as you can with your children—about the stresses and trials of your life. This shares with them your coping skills and models vulnerability

Planning—Help them to learn the power of goal setting and planning so that they can have a sense of focus and how their education can serve them in their future career.

Questions—Ask them. Don't be shy. They don't have to answer. Ask about their use of alcohol and drugs.

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Relationships and Sexual changes—Knowing adolescent stages of development and that their options and risks are confusing to them may help you be less judgmental

Suggestions. As they move through high school they will respond far better to suggestions than demands.

Television. Limit it. Set up your home environment to be conducive to study and to minimize distractions so that your student will have less opportunity to avoid homework and greater likelihood to read and study. If there are TV shows you watch has a family try to use it as an opportunity to teach critical thinking skills.

Unconditional Love—There will be times that you don't like what your child is doing but the power of unconditional love is magic, and their behaviors don't have to ruin your relationship.

Value your time with your teen. They'll be gone from home sooner than you realize.

Warning Signs—Learn the warning signs of depression, drug and alcohol abuse and other behaviors that might be detrimental to your child's health and well-being.

eXasperation doesn't do anyone any good. When you feel exasperated see if you can remove yourself from the situation and find another way to approach it.

Yes- has power just as "NO" does. Try to find opportunities to say `YES' to your teen.

Zzzzz-Sleep it's important to all of us to get through the stresses and strains of our full days. Your teen also needs sleep, do what you can to encourage reasonable bedtimes.