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# I N S I G H T S

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FOR FAMILIES



## Parenting tips for teens



**January  
2018**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Most people understand that raising kids and teens is hard. The difficulty may vary depending on the child and specific outside influences, but no one would argue about the challenge of the job.

Parents are learning how to do a job that the majority lack training for but sincerely want to do the best job they can for their kids.

There isn't just one way to be a good parent; however, these tried-and-true tips are useful for almost any family situation.

### **Avoid the common mistakes**

Start with what not to do. These tips from [webmd.com](http://webmd.com) help parents transition when their little kids become teens. "Your teen, or tween, will test your limits, and your patience. But they're still your child. And, though they won't admit it, they still need you! The key is knowing what efforts are worth it, and which ones backfire."

[www.webmd.com/parenting/features/parenting-mistakes-teens#1](http://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/parenting-mistakes-teens#1)

**1. Expecting the worst:** Negative expectations can actually promote the behavior you fear most. Instead, focus on your child's interests and hobbies, even if you don't understand them, which could open communication and help you reconnect with your child.

**2. Reading too many parenting books:** Relying on advice from experts rather than trusting personal instincts can create anxiety and lower confidence. Books can be helpful if the advice provides a new perspective or is adapted to individual situations.

**3. Sweating the small stuff:** Children are developing their own identity when they make choices about haircuts and clothes. Their style choices may not appeal to you, but they are important steps to independence. Step back and let them make these low-risk choices without adding critical comments.

**4. Ignoring the big stuff:** Take action if you suspect your child is using alcohol or drugs. High-risk behavior can have lasting negative consequences. Parents must watch for unexplained changes in behavior, appearance, academic performance and friends and get involved early, especially when kids are between the ages of 13-18, an impressionable time for teens.

**5. Too much, or too little, discipline:** Parents are sometimes too strict or too lenient when they fear losing control of their kids' behavior. The key is to find a balance. If the rules are too rigid, teens may rebel and miss out on developing problem solving skills. If they are too lax, kids may feel that they lack safe boundaries as they explore and grow. The best approach is to set up core family values and communicate them.

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## **Grumpy teens**

Although every parent was once a teen, adolescent behavior today seems like unfamiliar territory. Why do they challenge rules, talk back or sullenly avoid their parents? The behavior is not unusual, but it is not easy to be on the parent side of things – and many things are different than they were when parents were teens.

Sullen and grumpy teens are normal teens; however, it is easier to respond to teen moods if we understand the motive behind the behavior. According to psychologist Lisa Damour, teens do have good reasons for their moods.

**They worry about parent reaction to negative information, which will limit your teen's interest in talking to you.** Try to resist the temptation to scold them for not studying when they tell you they bombed a test. Start with a discussion, not a lecture.

**They anticipate negative repercussions.** It is important to understand that teens, like all people, make mistakes. A consequence for bad judgment may be warranted, but it can limit lines of communication if teens fear punishment for admitting the error.

**They worry that parents will blab.** Parents may still feel like sharing the highs and the lows of their children's lives – like they did when they were young. Repeating what they tell us can be a betrayal that damages their willingness to share again.

*<http://nyti.ms/2nqiqij>*

## **General tips**

Parenting teens well is a challenge most parents haven't been trained for. Parenting experts have a range of advice for how to bridge the gap between challenging teen behavior and good parent intentions. Pick and choose tips to help you from a variety of free guidance on the web. A simple web search for tips for parents of teens will help. These tips are from WebMD:

## **10 parenting tips for raising teenagers**

*[www.webmd.com/parenting/features/10-parenting-tips-for-raising-teenagers#1](http://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/10-parenting-tips-for-raising-teenagers#1)*

1. Give kids some leeway to make choices to help them establish their own identity.
2. Choose battles wisely. Purple hair and a messy room don't matter; permanent choices like self-harm and tattoos do.
3. Invite their friends to dinner. Knowing who your teens spends time with – and ensuring that they know you know – can provide an important layer of accountability.
4. Be sure that your teen knows the rules in advance, and be sure that your partner is on the same page.
5. Discuss check-ins. Parents must know where their children are. If you have trust issues with your teen, have them call during the evening to check in.
6. Talk about risks. Don't assume that your teen knows the worst that could happen from bad choices.
7. Give them a game plan. Help them plan how to handle potentially unsafe situations.
8. Keep the door open. Make sure they know you will listen when they are ready.
9. Let them feel guilty. It is healthy to feel bad when we do the wrong thing. Don't protect them from those feelings.
10. Be a role model. They are watching your actions and listening to your words.