

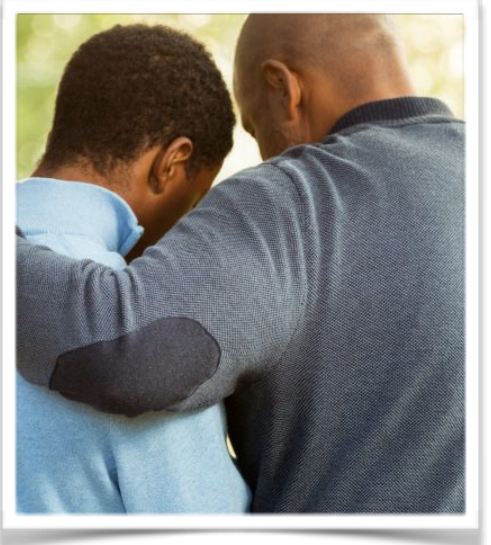
# Parenting Adolescents

## A simple guide for parents

### The Important Role of Parents in Adolescence

**“A high- quality parent-child relationship continues to serve as a source of resilience throughout adolescence and contributes to a successful launch into adulthood.”  
(Soenens et al., 2019)**

Parents describe the teenage years as a time of heated conflicts, irrational behaviors, emotional distance, forced independence, and broken rules. However, adolescence is also a time of great physical, emotional, and intellectual growth. Parents need to understand that adolescents go through a lot. They are trying to manage through their school work, friendships, relationships, and most importantly parents. Even though the teenage years can be a time of constant feuds and disagreements between children and their parents, it is still a period where parents are needed the most. In reality, parents play an important role in guiding their teenager through the obstacles of a new developmental stage including identity formation, decision-making, puberty, emotional regulation, and developing social competence.



Holding false beliefs about adolescence is extremely harmful. Parents end up falling into a trap known as the “self-fulfilling prophecy” whereby they expect their teenager to be irrational and uncontrollable, so they end up treating their child on this basis and consequently harm their relationship. In contrast, having a more understanding attitude of what adolescence really entails, parents are able to provide their teenager with the support and affection needed to flourish. For example, while adolescents may request their own independence, parents need to know that independence does not mean their parenting role is over. Parents will remain a point of reference and key socialization figures in their child’s life.

With independence comes attempts of renegotiations of rules and needs. In such cases, parents must be flexible and willing to adjust their relationship with their growing child.

Although parenting adolescence may seem like a difficult and complex task, there are various ways to overcome its challenges. This is not to say that supporting adolescents is an easy thing to do. Nevertheless, it is worth the effort. Parents who are emotionally present, believe in their

adolescent's capabilities, and provide space for individuality raise more competent teenagers. In fact, when adolescents feel supported by their parents, they prosper emotionally, are more resilient against social pressures, and play a role proactive and constructive role in their own development.

### DO'S OF PARENTING ADOLESCENTS:

- Use authoritative parenting, such as setting firm, clear and consistent limits. Allow disagreements and use reasoning while explaining.
- Be honest and authentic with your teen in order to build mutual trust which allows your adolescent to be honest as well and feel comfortable talking with you about difficult things. This also helps him/her to show trustworthy behavior in adulthood.
- Be present when needed, the adolescent phase is confusing for your teen, so being present helps your teen know that there is someone he/she can rely on when stuck in difficult situations. When parents show consistent presence, their teenagers will tend to go to them for advice instead of their friends.
- Enjoy time together, spending quality time with your teenager helps in building a closer relationship with them and thus encourages open communication. Children who have a healthy home environment will also withdraw from risky environments.
- Listen to their problems without judging, instead show compassion and empathy which helps them become loving and sensitive. Constant judgement leads teens to feel ashamed and pushes them farther from parents.
- Show moderate power and remain loving and emotionally supportive.
- Take interest in what your teenager is doing, make time to talk about these interests and let them know that you are always present. Support and motivate them to achieve their goals, this increases their self-esteem and strengthens their belief in their abilities.
- Show love, positive attention, and be consistency in parenting. Be friends with your teen.
- Set reasonable and clear expectations.
- Pay attention for friends they hand out with and the backgrounds they come from.
- Talk less and listen more, this allows them to express their emotions. Teens will feel as though their parents are a safe base they can always talk to.



- Accept their mistakes, the adolescent phase is a time where teens explore and learn what to do and what not to do, so when they do make a wrong decision, explain calmly their wrongdoings and remind them of how they should behave.

## DON'TS OF PARENTING ADOLESCENTS:

- Never lie to them, adolescents can notice whether you are really committed to what you say. If you are not honest with them, they will believe this is the right way of also communicating with you.
- Do not hold tremendous power over them, such as exhibit a controlling, rigid, and cold style of parenting that values strict unquestioning obedience. Such authoritarian style of parenting leads to withdrawn and socially awkward children.
- Do not restrict your child's freedom, instead, allow them to be independent and explore their surroundings. This allows teens to develop their social skills and learn to be independent, self-assertive and cooperative adults.
- Do not be absent from your teenager's life, once parents are not present teenagers will tend to withdraw from the family environment and will end up going for advice from their friends, this could be risky since friends could be a bad influence and thus lead your teen onto a dangerous path.
- Do not impose on them how you think they should be. Teens are trying to form their identity, when parents try to shape their adolescent's personality, they will turn out socially awkward, unsure and insecure about who they are.
- Do not be intrusive and respect their boundaries, personal space becomes very important during adolescence since it's a phase of trying to achieve independence and control over their decisions.
- Avoid constant criticism, teens are building their self-esteem, so when parents come along and criticize their views and beliefs, teenagers lose their confidence and become doubtful adults who are uncertain of what they believe in is right.
- Do not be over protective and controlling, this threatens your teens independence and may push him/her to feel as if lying to you is the only way they will get what they want because they are afraid of your reaction. Instead just warn them about the right and wrong, and the consequences.
- Do not neglect the good things they do, instead highlight their achievements and show appreciation. This motivates them to continue exhibiting positive behavior.
- Do not reject your teen when he/she express their emotions to you, instead listen well, understand their worries, show sympathy and offer help. Neglecting you adolescent's emotions will make them suppress all their negative feelings.

## References

Feldman, R. S. (2006). *Development across the life span*. Pearson Education New Zealand.

Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., & Beyers, W. (2019). Parenting adolescents.