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NEXT STOP ADULTHOOD: TIPS FOR PARENTS

AS YOUR CHILD BECOMES AN ADULT

- Becoming an adult does not happen overnight; it occurs over time and in steps.
- Letting go is a difficult but also rewarding part of life.
- Help your teen learn the responsibilities that come with being an adult.
- Relating to your child as an adult is new for both you and your child.

Becoming a young adult is exciting, difficult, and scary for both parents and teens. It is a time of increasing independence and change, no matter what the situation. For example:

- Going to college
- Moving out
- Starting a job
- Staying at home

TEACH INDEPENDENCE

Learning to be independent does not happen overnight. Just like getting a driver's license, it occurs over time and in steps.

- Learner's permit—learning new skills with supervision
- License with limitations—taking on some responsibilities, but with parental support
- Full license—being fully responsible for one's own actions

Parents need to give up much of the control over many of their young adult's decisions. But parents still worry about their child's safety, health, and success. This is where you need to trust the job you have done as a parent.

LET GO, BUT STAY CONNECTED

Parents give guidance and feedback to their children at every age, but giving advice to a young adult is different from telling a child what to do or teaching a child how to do something.

Giving and getting advice.

Young adults need to know that everybody needs advice and help from others for the rest of their lives. Parents now need to be open to getting advice and feedback from their adult children.

Effective communication is an important part of this new relationship.

Open and honest communication is key. Even though some topics may be difficult or even embarrassing for you, this is the basis of a healthy adult relationship with your child.

Understanding each other may be difficult.

There may be times when you do not agree with each other, and conflicts may occur. Try not to let getting mad or angry turn into a fight. Fights don't solve problems; they make new ones.

Be a role model.

Solve problems and conflicts with respect for your teen. Acknowledge and apologize when you are wrong. This is an excellent way to teach your child how to peaceably solve conflicts with others.



HELP TEENS LEARN RESPONSIBILITY

As teens gain the privileges that come with being adults, they need to understand the responsibilities toward others and the community that come with these privileges. Decisions that adults make have adult consequences, both good and bad, that they will need to live with.

Do less.

Parents need to stop doing things for their teens, like making lunch or running an “emergency” load of wash, that teens can do for themselves. Parents who complain most bitterly about their teens’ irresponsibility are often the ones who don’t make their kids do anything for themselves.

Let consequences happen.

There is no need to come up with special punishments to discourage irresponsibility. Simply let nature take its course.

- Forgotten homework assignments result in lower grades or having to do make-up work.
- Not putting clothes into the hamper means that there might be nothing but dirty clothes to wear.

Of course, it is hard to stand by and see your child suffer embarrassment or defeat. A parent naturally wants to jump in and help. Remind yourself that the most helpful thing you can do is allow your child to learn to take responsibility, the sooner the better.

Give a regular allowance, but no extras.

When you are seen as a source of ready cash, your child has no incentive to handle money responsibly. Decide on a fair amount, and discuss how to budget by spending a little and saving for larger purchases. Then refuse to pay for any items that are not needed. If teens don’t have money for something they want, they soon will learn to budget.



Teach ways to be more organized.

Teens who have trouble staying organized can appear irresponsible. By teaching specific skills, like always putting keys in a particular spot, you are helping your child become a responsible adult.

Help your teen think through options.

Adolescents make large, life-changing decisions, like whether to drink, smoke, have sex, or go to college. They also make smaller but still important decisions, like whether to try out for soccer or use the time for studying or an after-school job.

One way to help with decisions is to sit down together and actually write down the answers to the following questions:

- What is the difficulty?
- What are possible solutions?
- What are consequences of each solution?
- Which of those consequences is most desirable from a **practical, personal, moral, or legal point of view?**

RELATING AS ADULTS

As children become adults, the way children and parents relate needs to change. The goal is to respect each other as adults.

Continue sharing, listening, and asking questions.

Parents want to hear about how their “kids” are doing. It is also important for children to know “what’s going on” with their parents.

Having lunch or dinner together is a good way to keep up-to-date with each other and have fun at the same time. Don’t stop being interested in each other’s lives.

LIVING AT HOME

Everyone needs to help with the work of the family.

Whether the chores are divided up using a formal schedule or everyone just pitches in when they can, everyone needs to help out at home.

You might want to have a family meeting to decide who does what. It’s all about **fairness**.

A pleasant place to live.

Teens and young adults need to know that they can’t play their music so loudly that it disturbs others. Everyone needs to pick up clothing and other items in spaces they share, especially hallways and bathrooms.

“Living in the same home means that we need to treat each other with courtesy and respect.”

A space to call their own.

Even in small homes, providing teenagers with a space to call their own is important. This allows them the freedom to express themselves and to develop their own sense of self-discipline.

For example, they can decorate their room as they wish and keep it as messy or neat as they choose, *within reason*. It is within your rights to insist that a room be picked up if it starts to smell bad or affects the home.

Being safe.

Parents always will be concerned about their children. But as children get older, they need to begin to assume some responsibility for their own safety.

For example, when parents communicate curfews as a matter of safety, it is more likely to be accepted. Teens and young adults need to know that if they are not able to make the curfew, they need to get in touch with the person who is waiting up for them.

“You have to be home by 11:00 because the streets aren’t safe after that. If you can’t be home by then, please give me a call.”

Connected Kids are Safe, Strong, and Secure

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