

Parenting Teens:

Help Young People Grow into
Capable and Responsible Adults

Participant Packet

Solutions to Everyday Problems

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Parenting Teens:

Help Young People Grow into Capable and Responsible Adults

OVERVIEW

Learning Objectives

This seminar will help parents improve communication and have more positive interactions with their teenage children. They will learn how to better understand what is happening inside their teens and in their world so that they can react with more neutral, or even positive, thoughts and emotions. Topics to be covered include the hormonal and brain changes of adolescence, features of modern life that create a vastly different environment for teens than the world in which the parents grew up, and how the job of parenting has changed. Special attention will be paid to how to build teens' resiliency so they can better deal with challenges and difficulties, and what parents need to do for themselves to stay balanced through these challenging years.

Agenda:

- Welcome 5 minutes
- Hormonal and brain changes of adolescence
- The modern teen world
- Parents' roles during adolescence
- Helping teens build resiliency
- Staying balanced as a parent
- Resources
- Wrap Up 5 minutes

Seminar Length: Approximately 1 hour



Parenting Teens

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Seminar Topics

- Hormonal and brain changes of adolescence
- The modern teen world
- Parents' roles during adolescence
- Helping teens build resiliency
- Staying balanced as a parent



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Hormonal Changes



- Hormonal changes can create intense emotions and mood swings
- Increased testosterone creates more impulsivity, risk taking, and aggression
- Problems with sleep occur due to delayed melatonin surge at night



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- Intense emotions and mood swings may occur as their bodies send bursts of hormones into their systems throughout the day.
- Young men experience rushes of testosterone up to 5 to 7 times per day. This results in impulsive, risk taking behavior, and sometimes in aggression.
- Melatonin settles the body to prepare for sleep. It is secreted about an hour later in teens than in adults. This is one reason why they may have trouble getting to sleep as early as parents think they should. During the week teens accumulate a “sleep debt” or “deficit” that impacts their moods, thinking and behavior. Let their bodies catch up on rest on the weekends by sleeping in some of the time.

Brain Development



- Growing connections in the brain allow more complex thinking
- Increased ability to empathize can create self consciousness
- Incomplete neural wiring may result in impulsive behavior and misreading others' emotions



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- Understanding their brain development will help you have more patience and compassion.
- There are two major waves of brain growth. One occurs about age 2-3 and the other beginning around age 12. Nerve cells in the brain are extending many connections to other cells. This results in rapid growth of abilities.
- After this period the brain “prunes” unused connections. “Use it or lose it”. Concerns about large amounts of screen time with TV, computers and video games are in part because they take the place of other activities that could be helping maintain the brain’s new connections and capabilities.
- Growing brain structure gives them the ability to have greater perspective and empathy but also can create self-consciousness.
- Parts of their brain aren’t fully hooked up. They may not have the “brakes” that adults do on impulsive behavior and can misread emotions of others.

The Modern Teen World



- Technology – always “on”, provides neurochemical “hits” to the brain, creates a separate realm of interaction that excludes adults
- Peer Pressure – competition, cyber-bullying, wanting to fit in



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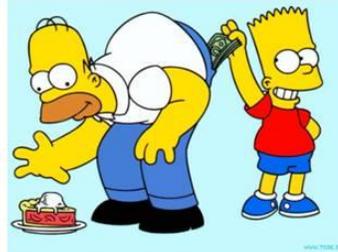


- Technology provides teens with a world of independent action. Parents may not know their teens’ friends.
- Technology use provides neurochemical reinforcement similar to that of addictive substances.
- There is growing evidence of problems with concentration and deep thinking with constant technology use.
- Technology can compound peer pressure. Peer pressure isn’t just from others pushing them to try things. It is often from just wanting to fit in. Social networking provides more opportunities for “social drama”.

The Modern Teen World



- Intergenerational isolation – decreased interaction with adults, media promotion of adults as incompetent or irrelevant



- Shifting Family Expectations – increased cultural pressure for academic success combined with decreased expectations of family involvement

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- Modern teens frequently experience decreased meaningful interaction with adults than in past generations and lose opportunities for gaining wisdom and perspective from adults.
- TV and movies often portray adults as incompetent or irrelevant leading teens to devalue parents' advice and turn to their peers.
- Families feel pressure for success in the global economy which can lead to high academic expectations and result in teens being very busy and not available for family time. Parents sometimes decrease expectations for teens in the home. Teens then lose opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the family that help develop their self-esteem and feeling of belonging.

Parents' Roles During Adolescence



Stay Connected

- Preserve family time
- Explore their world
- Reach out with small daily doses of friendly contact
- Strive for a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions



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- Preserve family time by eating meals together as often as you can. Expect them to participate in some family events. Expect resistance but be gently persistent and try to make the time enjoyable for everyone. Consider turning off phone ringers or placing phones in another room during meals to avoid distraction from texts.
- Practice the gentle art of conversation. Try not to criticize or be too directive.
- Preserving family time sends a powerful, protective message that their roles in the family are as important as their roles as students, or members of a sports team or band.
- Learn about their favorite music, occasionally read their novels for class or a textbook chapter so you have something to talk about other than “How was your day?”
- Reach out by bringing them a snack or showing them something interesting when they’re working on homework. Suggest a break to do something different– play cards, take a walk, watch TV.
- Friendly touch settles the nervous system and gives a sense of security. Give occasional hugs, backrubs, high fives, etc.
- Every day look for opportunities to maintain the 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions.

Exercise:

List ideas for daily positive interaction with your teens

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Parents' Roles During Adolescence



Stay Connected

- Be kind to their friends
- Be honest and authentic
- Avoid emotional reactions to what they say
- Savor positive moments



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- Find common topics of interest with their friends. Joke with them. Do small favors. Stock up on food so they'll stick around and you can get to know them better.
- Talk about your own life with your family, both the past and what's going on now. Consider a ritual at dinner where each person shares the high and low points of the day. This models resilience, humility and compassion for oneself.
- Teens have strong ambivalent feelings toward family. You can set limits with disrespect, but try not to take it personally. As much as they seem to push you away, they don't want you to leave emotionally.
- Notice, in the moment, when things are going well and enjoy it! When they aren't going well, remember times that were.

Parents' Roles During Adolescence



Stay Connected

- Prepare for and have those “tough talks” about your values
- Establish regular family meetings to open dialogue and help build co-operation



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- Reflect on your values about work, money, character, relationships and sexuality, and alcohol and drugs. Don't “preach”, but look for natural opportunities to talk about these things when they come up in movies, or in the news. Ask their thoughts before sharing yours. Be ready to drop it if they don't respond, and try another time.
- Family meetings reduce daily conflict and create positive relationships where each person feels respected. They help busy families stay organized.

Family Meetings



Your family can use family meetings to communicate and solve problems. Your children can be meaningfully included as early as the preschool years. These meetings will teach your child to respect you and will give you an opportunity to demonstrate respect for your child. Family meetings also ensure that you will have an opportunity to instruct your child about your expectations. Family meetings are a highly effective way of dealing with siblings' complaints about one another.

Here are some suggestions for conducting effective family meetings:

- Make meetings official.
- Have meetings at a set time (ideally the same time every week), and end them on time.
- Be sure everyone follows some basic rules:
 - Let the person who is speaking finish without being interrupted.
 - Do not make fun of or judge others' ideas.
 - Promise not to use things others say during the meeting against them later.
- Ask each person for his views and feelings on the topic or problem being discussed.
- Discuss family activities as well as problems so the meetings include something positive.
- Express appreciation for each other, perhaps as a formal part of each meeting.
- Use a problem-solving strategy if necessary.
- Write down conclusions from the meeting and post them in a place where everyone can see them.
- Make the meetings fun. Consider serving dessert or pizza, or playing a game. Ask your children to suggest ideas for making the meetings a special time for the family.

Source: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health and Georgetown University. Used with permission

Parents' Roles During Adolescence



Run Interference

- Explore your expectations for achievement and protect them from others' excessive demands
- Protect them from social "drama"
- Create "screen-free" times at home



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- Act a boundary to protect them from possible damaging influences. Think about the messages you send to them about performance and if they are sufficiently challenging, but realistic.
- Consider that healthy adult development must be balanced. Being competent is one goal, but physical health, emotional intelligence, and compassion are also vital.
- Advocate with teachers or school if the workload is excessive and teens aren't able to get rest, or "downtime" due to the load. A documentary exploring this, *The Race to Nowhere*, is popular at many schools at the moment.
- Get to know your teens' friends and their families. Other teens' parents can be a good sounding board and may know about social drama, bullying, or other risky behaviors in the school community that your teen hasn't shared.
- When young teens start using social media sites consider requiring that you be "friended" by them until you have confidence in their maturity to use it wisely.
- More and more adults are taking "virtual breaks" where they turn off technology for a little while. Consider doing this at home occasionally to let everyone slow down. Teens may say they're bored, but boredom is often a source of creativity.

- _____

Exercise: Listening

Read the teen's comments then fill in the blanks for the topic and emotion(s). Keep it brief. Try using variations on 4 primary emotions: Mad, Sad, Glad, Scared.

1. Mr. Feldman gave us pop quiz in math today! He never said anything about pop quizzes at the beginning of the year. It's not fair!

Oh, you're really (emotion) _____ about (topic) _____!

2. Sarah ditched me at lunch. She just went off with some other girls and didn't even tell me.

Sounds like you're (emotion) _____ about (topic) _____.

3. Dad is so mean! All I did was ask him if he could help me with my project. He told me I should have asked him earlier. I don't know why he can't help. All he's doing is watching that stupid TV show.

Gosh! You're (emotion) _____ that (topic) _____.

4. School is ridiculous. Why do we have to learn all these dates in history? What am I ever going to do with that?

You're really (emotion) _____ about _____.

5. Next week is our physics field trip to Great America! Yay!

Sounds like you're (emotion) _____ about _____.

Exercise: Manager to Coach

Shift from manager to coach: Ask teens if they want advice instead of just offering it.

Also let teens have some freedom to decide when they will do homework, go to bed, or start chores. Many power struggles can be avoided by focusing on the end result while letting them decide upon the process. If the teen isn't successful then parents can step in again temporarily.

Choose neutral words to describe behavior. Avoid language that is extreme or suggests a motivation.

A parent comes home and the teen has left shoes, jacket, dishes, etc. in various places around the house. The parent is tired and still has to cook dinner. They've talked about this problem many times before. The parent says:

"I am so tired of coming home to a messy house! There is stuff all over the place. How many times do I have to tell you to pick up after yourself? I am not your maid!"

Rephrase in a neutral way:

A parent sees dirty pans in the sink after the teen has been asked to clean the kitchen. The parent says:

You forgot to do the pans.

Rephrase:

Parents' Roles During Adolescence



Communication Strategies

- Be specific and clear about expectations
- Don't take their reactions personally
- Give yourself a "time out" as needed



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- When communicating your expectations be clear and specific about what you want them to do and by what time. Instead of "Please clean the kitchen today" try, "Please empty the dishwasher, wipe down the counters, and sweep the floor before I get home at 6."
- Teens can sometimes "push buttons" in very personal ways. They can make harsh comments to parents when they feel embarrassed by them. Or they may say that their parents are "controlling" or "paranoid" when they're asked where they're going. Try not to react or argue. You can disarm the comment by agreeing that perhaps you are controlling AND you still need to know where they're going. Keep calm!
- Give yourself a time out if you get upset. Take a walk, do a chore, relax to music, etc. for about 20-30 minutes then return to the conversation.

Parents' Roles During Adolescence



Building Resiliency

- Provide opportunities for them to discover what is important to them
- Help connect them to other supportive adults
- Give them opportunities to contribute to the family in meaningful ways



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- Notice what things they seem to really enjoy or be passionate about. It may be different from what you think would be valuable, but talk with them about it and compliment them.
- If they don't have something that really engages them, provide opportunities to explore different activities: artistic, physical, challenging problem solving, a social or political cause, helping people or animals.
- Encourage multigenerational family relationships. Help them connect with family friends on more than a basic level. Show interest in their connections with teachers, coaches, and other instructors. They may turn to these trusted adults in times of difficulty if they can't talk to parents.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful "chores". Consider having them learn to cook family meals, balance a checkbook, or do some research for a family vacation.

Staying Balanced as a Parent



- Let go of guilt
- Fill your own “pitcher” of well-being
- Take care of your body – exercise, good nutrition and sleep
- Learn more about the teen brain
- Refresh your listening skills



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The Final Instruction: Enjoy Them



- Appreciate how their growing minds are exploring the world.
- Notice their developing empathy for others
- Laugh together at yourselves
- Talking with teens can be enlightening and fun!



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Resources

Books

Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teenagers – Michael Riera, Ph.D.

Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen – David Walsh, Ph.D.

The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries about the Teenage Brain Tell Us About Our Kids – Barbara Strauch

Raising Kids Who Can: Use Good Judgment, Assume Responsibility, Communicate Effectively, Respect Self and Others, Cooperate, Develop Self-esteem and Enjoy Life – Betty Lou Bettner, Ph.D and Amy Lew, Ph.D.

Stop Struggling with Your Teen: With a Workbook to Help You Identify and Resolve Specific Problems – Evonne Weinhaus and Karen Friedman

Getting to Calm: Cool-headed Strategies for Parenting Tweens +Teens – Laura Kastner, Ph.D and Jennifer Wyatt, Ph.D.

The Seven-Year Stretch: How Families Work Together to Grow Through Adolescence – Laura Kastner, Ph.D. and Jennifer Wyatt, Ph.D.

The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children Against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience – Martin Seligman, Ph.D.

Doing School: How We are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students – Denise Clark Pope

The Roller-Coaster Years: Raising Your Child Through the Maddening Yet Magical Middle School Years – Charlene Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese

Get Out of My Life – but First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall? : A Parent’s Guide to the New Teenager – Anthony Wolf, Ph.D.

Positive Discipline: Teaching Children Self-Discipline, Responsibility, Cooperation, and Problem-Solving Skills – Jane Nelsen, Ed.D.

Don’t Stop Loving Me: A Reassuring Guide for Mothers of Adolescent Daughters – Ann Caron, Ed.D.

The Parents We Mean to Be: How Well-intentioned Adults Undermine Children’s Moral and Emotional Development – Richard Weissbourd

That Crumpled Paper Was Due Last Week: Helping Disorganized and Distracted Boys Succeed in School and Life – Ana Homayoun

TREAT FRIENDS, KIDS THE SAME

by Erma Bombeck

On TV the other day, a leading child psychologist said parents should treat their children as they would treat their best friend . . . with courtesy, dignity, and diplomacy.

“I have never treated my children any other way,” I told myself. But later that night, I thought about it. Did I really talk to my best friends like I talked to my children? Just suppose . . . our good friends, Fred and Eleanor, came to dinner one night and . . .

“Well, it’s about time you two got here! What have you been doing? Dawdling? Leave those shoes outside Fred. They’ve got mud on them. And, shut the door. Were you born in a barn?

“So, Eleanor, how have you been? I’ve been meaning to have you over for a long time, Fred!

Take it easy on the chip dip or you’ll ruin your dinner. I didn’t work over a hot stove all day long to have you nibble like some bird.

“Hear from any of the gang lately? Got a card from the Martins. Yes, they’re in Lauderdale again. They go every year to the same spot. What’s the matter with you, Fred? You’re fidgeting. Of course you have to go. It’s down the hall, first door on the left. And, I don’t want to see a towel in the middle of the floor when you are finished.

“Did you wash your face before you came, Eleanor? I see a dark spot around your mouth. I guess it’s a shadow. So, how are your children? If you ask me, I think summer school is great for them. Is everybody hungry? Then, why don’t we go in to dinner? You all wash up, and I’ll take up the food. Don’t tell me your hands are clean, Eleanor. I saw you playing with the dog.

“Fred, you sit over there and Eleanor, you can sit with the half glass of milk. You know how your elbows are when it comes to milk. There now, your host will say grace.

“Fred, I don’t see any cauliflower on your plate. Have you ever tried it? Well, try a spoonful. If you don’t like it, I won’t make you finish it, but if you don’t try it, you can just forget dessert.

And sit up straight or your spine will grow that way. Now, what were we talking about? Oh yes, the Gerbers. They sold their house. I mean they took a beating but . . . Eleanor, don’t talk with food in your mouth. I can’t understand a word you’re saying. And use your napkin.”

At that moment in my fantasy, my son walked into the room. “How nice of you to come, “I said pleasantly.

“Now what did I do?” he sighed.

Seminar Evaluation Form

CONCERN: Employee Assistance Program

Please fill out and return to presenter or HR Representative. Your feedback is very important to us. Thank you!

Seminar Title Parenting Teens

Date: _____

Company: _____

Presenter: _____

Regarding the Seminar	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. How well were the seminar objectives met?					
2. Usefulness of seminar information?					
3. Length of seminar?					
4. Effectiveness of exercises?					
5. How would you rate this seminar overall?					

Regarding the Presenter	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Presentation skills?					
2. Ability to answer questions?					
3. Knowledge of subject?					
4. Use of time?					
5. Overall assessment of presenter?					

Additional Comments

1. What would you recommend to make this seminar more effective? _____

2. What part of the seminar did you find most helpful? _____

3. Additional comments/suggestions for speaker's improvement? _____

Thank you for your feedback.