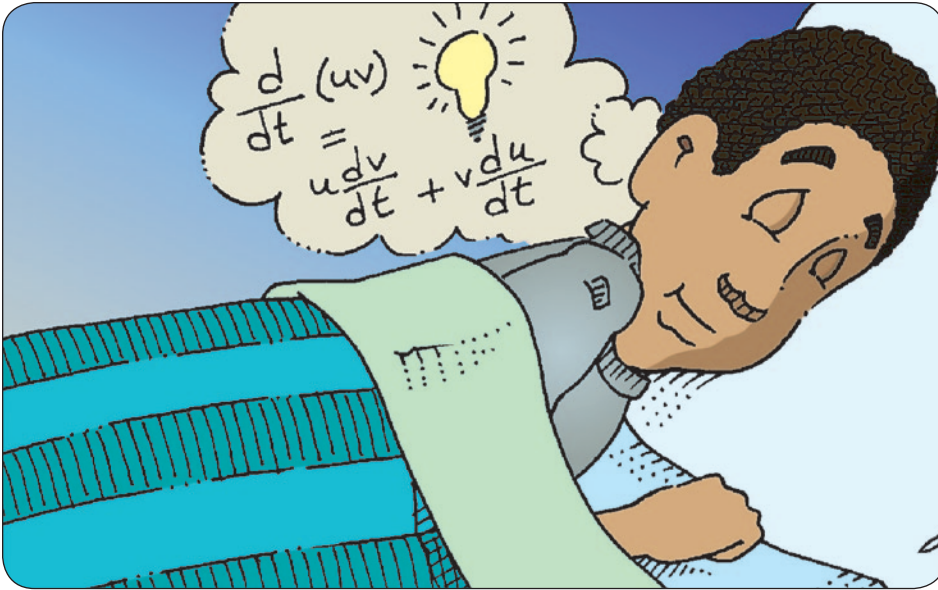


High School Parents[®]

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Katy Independent School District

still make the difference!



Brain researchers say teens need sleep in order to learn

If your teen says, "I studied it, but I can't remember what I studied," the problem may be lack of sleep. Brain researchers have learned that sleep is part of the learning process.

During the time we are asleep, our brains consolidate what we have learned. While we are asleep, our brains actually practice new learning.

Researchers studied teens who learned how to do a simple task—catching a ball on a string in a cone-like cup. With practice, the teens could do this task faster and more accurately. A few days later, researchers found that the students who got a good night's sleep continued to do well. But students who

slept for six hours or fewer either did not improve or actually did worse.

Clearly, sleep matters. Whether your teen is learning history or algebra or science, he needs to get a good night's sleep.

It is hard to make sure teens get enough sleep. But there are things you can do. Enforce a regular bedtime. Keep distractions (like cell phones) out of the bedroom. Encourage your teen to be active, especially earlier in the day. All these will make sleep easier—and will help your teen's brain remember.

Source: S. Spinks, "Adolescents and Sleep: A Summary of what Researchers Know About Teenagers' Need for Sleep and Why Sleep Affects Memory and Learning," www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/from/sleep.html.

Do you know how much your teenager texts?



Did you know that 75 percent of teen cell phone users have plans that include unlimited texting? These teens send an average of 70 texts per day—that's around 2,100 each month! And one in three teens sends more than 100 texts per day—or over 3,000 each month!

In addition, fully two-thirds of teens say they are more likely to use their cell phones to text their friends than talk to them by phone.

While it's good that teens are communicating with their friends, it's important that you:

- **Set limits on phone use.** Make sure your teen isn't texting when she should be sleeping or doing homework.
- **Support school rules** on cell phone use—and teachers' specific classroom rules.
- **Encourage your teen** to talk to friends face-to-face. This uses important social skills. Teens will be unable to text their way through job interviews.

Source: A. Lenhart, "Teens, Cell Phone and Texting: Text Messaging Becomes Centerpiece Communication," PewResearchCenter Publications, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1572/teens-cell-phones-text-messages>.

Talking with your teenager can prevent drug & alcohol abuse



A recent study has revealed a startling change in teens' abuse of and attitudes about drugs and alcohol. From 2008 to 2009:

- **The number** of high schoolers who used alcohol in the past month increased by 11 percent.
- **The number** of past-year ecstasy users jumped from six percent to 10 percent.
- **Past-year marijuana** use showed a 19 percent increase.

Not only has use of drugs and alcohol increased among teens, but teens are beginning to look at these illegal activities in a more favorable light. Fifty-one percent of high schoolers agreed that "being high feels good," while 75 percent reported that "friends usually get high at parties."

Yet the scariest statistic might be the number of teens who agreed strongly that they "don't want to hang around drug users"—this

number has decreased over the year, from 35 percent in 2008 to a mere 30 percent in 2009.

That doesn't mean that your teen has to be one of these numbers. Here's what you can do:

- **Talk with your teen.** Discuss your views on drug and alcohol abuse.
- **Know where your teen is going.** Make sure all parties she attends are supervised by an adult.
- **Meet your teen's friends** and their parents. That way, when your teen says "Everyone's going!" you can find out if "everyone" really is.

Source: "Key Findings of the 2009 Partnership/MetLife Foundation Attitude Tracking Study (PATS)," The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/Research/Teen_Study_2009/TRACKING_STUDY_PATS_2009.

"The purpose of raising children is simply to help them out of our lives into successful lives of their own."

—John Rosemond

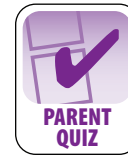
Support your high schooler's growing self-discipline



By high school, teens should have developed some self-discipline. To encourage self-discipline in your teen:

- **Avoid rescuing your teen.** If he gets himself into a jam, let him handle the consequences. If he forgets his homework at home, he'll have to talk to his teacher about doing a makeup assignment.
- **Don't do things** your teen can do for himself. Your teen is perfectly capable of making a snack, folding laundry, etc. And if he isn't, he needs to learn.
- **Encourage your teen** to take part in activities that develop self-discipline. Any activity—like a sport, band or a play—for which your teen needs to practice a skill is an activity that builds self-discipline.
- **Expect your teen** to develop his own study schedule—and stick to it. It's up to your teen to decide when he'll complete his homework—and to make sure it gets done.
- **Allow your teen choices** about which responsibilities he'll share in your home. Let him decide whether he'd rather clean the bathrooms or mow the lawn.

Are you helping your teen become a problem solver?



You can never anticipate all the problems your teen will face in his life. But you can help him learn how to solve prob-

lems as they arise. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen become a problem solver:

___ **1. Do you help your teen** define exactly what the problem is?

___ **2. Do you brainstorm** possible solutions? At this stage, the more solutions, the better.

___ **3. Do you discuss** the good and bad points of each of the strategies? Also think about the consequences of each possible choice.

___ **4. Do you remind** your teen about your family rules and values when he is choosing which solution to try?

___ **5. Do you help** your teen come up with a plan B if the first solution is not successful?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your teen develop the skills to solve problems successfully. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Take time to notice signs of responsibility in your teenager



Responsibility is more than remembering to complete chores or turning in homework on time. It is also thinking ahead about how words or actions will affect others, and then speaking or acting accordingly in a respectful manner.

Encourage and look for the following actions in your teen. Praise him for being responsible when you see him:

- **Keep promises.** Responsible people don't break promises. When they give their word, others know they can count on them.
- **Admit mistakes.** Being responsible is not being perfect. In fact, it's just the opposite. Responsible people make mistakes all the time. But they don't just shrug them

off. They admit their mistakes and they make amends if needed.

- **Accept consequences.** Sometimes mistakes can have bad results. Responsible people deal with the results of their mistakes without trying to blame others. They learn from mistakes and rarely make the mistake a second time.
- **Make wise choices.** Responsible people will put on that bike helmet—even if no one else is.
- **Take care of belongings.** Realizing that people work hard and care for their belongings is a sign of being responsible.

Source: Ron Herron and Val J. Peter, *Who's in the Mirror? Finding the Real Me*, ISBN: 1-889322-20-2, Boys Town Press.

Heading to college next fall? Be sure to fill out the FAFSA now



Many college applications are due in January and February. And even before you know exactly where your teen will go to college, it's time to begin thinking about financial aid.

A large portion of colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine how much federal financial aid each student is eligible for. State and school deadlines for filling out the FAFSA vary, so your best bet is to fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible beginning January 1 of each year.

Take time this December to gather the information your teen will need to fill out the FAFSA. The FAFSA also takes into consideration your income information, if you claim your child as a dependent on your

taxes. For the 2011-2012 school year, your teen will need financial information from 2010. To complete the FAFSA, your teen will need:

- **His social security number.**
- **His driver's license** (if he has one).
- **His 2010 W-2 Forms** and other records of money earned.
- **His 2010 Federal Income Tax Return.**
- **Your 2010 Federal Income Tax Return** (if your teen is a dependent).
- **His current bank statements.**
- **His current investment information** (if applicable).
- **His alien registration** or permanent resident card (if he is not a U.S. citizen).

Source: FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid, www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Q: My 16-year-old and I used to be great friends. She told me everything. But in the last few months, she has almost stopped talking with me. I hear her talking on the phone with her friends and making fun of the things I've said. What did I do to deserve this?

Questions & Answers

A: You didn't do anything at all—you just had a daughter who reached the age of 16. (Some wise mother said, "Sixteen is eight times worse than the Terrible Twos—and with a driver's license.")

It's not going to help much to tell you that she's doing exactly what she's supposed to at this age. She's starting to separate from you. She'll need to do that so she can leave home, go to college and get a job.

But there's no denying that it hurts. One reaction would be to return her rejection with rejection of your own. Don't do that—it isn't going to help her and it will make you feel worse.

Instead, try to stay involved with her. Come to her school activities. Invite her to have school friends over to watch a movie and eat pizza.

And don't be afraid to set some rules. She doesn't have to talk with you, but she can't be rude. She can't miss family dinners if those are important. She has to help around the house.

Just as the Terrible Twos eventually ended, so will this phase. If you keep the lines of communication open, she'll want to talk with you again.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Homework

Four things to know about a research paper



Sooner or later, a teacher will require your teen to write a research paper. This is the kind of writing your child will do in college, so it's helpful to get some practice now.

But writing a research paper isn't like writing a text message to a friend. Here are four important things your teen should remember:

- 1. A research paper requires research.** This means more than doing a Google search! She should start with a trip to the library. Ask the librarian to help her find books and other articles on her topic. Remember that all facts have to be documented. Your teen needs to keep careful records of where her information comes from.
- 2. Be careful about plagiarism.** Sometimes, teens copy and paste whole sentences or even paragraphs from others' work. This is a sure way to earn a failing grade. Teachers are using technology to catch students who do this.
- 3. Follow the format.** When a teacher assigns a research paper, she will also tell teens exactly which format she expects them to use. Your teen needs to follow these instructions exactly.
- 4. Allow plenty of time.** Writing the first research paper is like doing any other task for the first time. It won't come naturally. So be sure your teen does not put it off until the last minute!

Source: Study Guides and Strategies, "Elements of a Research Paper," www.studygs.net/wrtstr8.htm.

Use a project board to finish major projects on deadline

In high school, assignments get longer and more complicated. Keeping track of deadlines and details can be a challenge for any teen. A project board can help.

All you need is a large sheet of paper or tagboard. On it, create a table with two columns.

Have your teen break down the big project into individual steps. For example, before she can write an outline for the paper, she has to do her reading. Before she can do that, she has to go to the library.

Once she has all the steps outlined, have her write them in the left column. In the right column, write the due date. Start at the bottom with the date the project is due. Then work backwards. How long will it take to edit the paper?

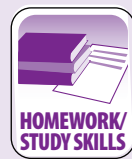


How long to write the second draft?
The first draft?

Now post the project board close to where she studies. That way, she will see clearly what she needs to do next.

Source: Roy Fry, *Get Organized: Second Edition*, ISBN: 1-564-14461-5, Career Press.

Does your teen know the steps to effective memorization?



Being successful in school involves remembering a lot of information. Here are some tips to help your teen memorize more effectively:

- **Get exercise.** Researchers at the University of Illinois have found that exercise is important for brains as well as for bodies! Physical activity increases the flow of blood to the brain.
- **Break it down.** Don't try to memorize a list of 50 words. Instead, make five lists of 10 words each. It's easier to recall shorter lists of information.

That's why flash cards are such a good way to memorize—your teen can take out a list of five or 10 cards, learn them, and then move on to the next grouping.

- **Practice.** While practice doesn't always make perfect, it does make learning permanent. So while your teen is trying to memorize new material, make sure he practices. You can help. Offer to be a study partner, asking questions from the flash cards or study notes.

Source: "Exercise Appears to Improve Brain Function Among Younger People," Science Daily, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/12/061219122200.htm.