

10 Keys to Raising a Great Teen

There are many parents who fear their children's teenage years. That fear may be merited because these are the years that the relationship between the kid and the family is being redefined.

The importance of friends rises for them, while the parents and siblings fall. The fruit of your labor is not as easily seen as it once was. In some cases, it may even seem like your influence is outright rejected. If so, hang in there. Your work is not in vain. This period can prove to be the most rewarding and most vibrant phase of parenting.

Here are 10 keys to raising a great teenager:

1. Encourage their faith. Young people are consistently being told that their worth is determined by how they look and perform. Encouraging their faith in that their value comes from the God that created them gives them permission and confidence to be themselves. It will also affirm their moral character.

2. Under all the scowls and frowns, your child is still there. Even when they are dismissing you, there is a place deep down that is relieved you are there looking out for them. They still need your attention and acknowledgement. They may want more space, but they still want you to pursue them. Don't let your hurt feelings stop you from doing it. That phase will end. Study them and how they are changing. Affirm their growth.

3. Let your love show. All the love and affection they needed when they were younger, they still need now. Loving your kid means you need to find ways to express your love through your actions and words. Don't leave your teen wondering where you

stand on them. They may reject you, but a loving father never rejects his kids.

4. Don't talk at your teens. All day they are being lectured by adults, many of whom care more about their own agenda than the kids. It's exhausting for teens and causes them to not trust adults. Recognize that fatigue is there. When disciplining or giving your teens advice, talk to them as adults. Also, keep it clear and concise.

5. Remember to listen. This statement ties in with the one above. Few adults respect and listen to teens. When you listen to your teen, they feel empowered. They feel that they have a voice.

6. Reinforce a standard within teens. Children aren't born knowing what's right. As they get older, teens face pressure to abandon or want to experiment outside the moral standards given to them when they were younger. It's not only important to remind them what they were taught in their younger, but give practical reasons why there are boundaries. Don't be afraid to be the one they blame to their friends as strict. They may actually be thanking you internally.

7. Get to know their friends. Teens want to choose their friends. Ask them questions about them and listen. Try to get to know their friends. Create an environment at your house that makes other kids want to gather there. Get to know their friends' parents and family.

8. Offer your wisdom. Being a dad, you automatically have a gift of wisdom because you lived longer than your teenagers. They probably will never admit that you were right or that they don't know everything. However, you are a source of wisdom they need.

9. Help them stay focused. Help them find a balance between enjoying the immediate and looking towards the future. It's easy to forget the consequences of our current choices. Teach

them the joy of delayed gratification. Everything isn't about the Friday night football games or Senior Prom.

10. Take them on an adventure. Nothing earns the right with a teenager like doing something adventurous together. Take them to a high ropes course, go camping, or whitewater rafting. Taking them out of their comfort zone and yours will increase their bond with you.

What has been the most challenging thing about raising your teenager?

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