

COPE Center Parenting Workshop Pocket Reference

Countdown to a Successful Launch While Staying Connected to Your Teen

The hardest thing about being a loving parent is holding back to allow your teen to make mistakes and face failure. It's a fine line between remaining involved enough to make sure she doesn't endanger herself or providing advice when he is making a big decision and taking over the process.

Coaching Your Teen to Independence

This process should start before adolescence. As children grow and develop, it is important to give them opportunities for autonomy in line with their physical, emotional and social development. On our website you can find resources in *Topics for Parents: Ages and Stages* to help guide you in this on-going work:

<http://www.supportingparentssexnj.org/ages-and-stages/>

- Coach your teen to problem solve for him/herself, don't do it for them
- Don't shield them from failure and rejection, but support them in coping
- Suggest strategies for problem solving and agree to rules for you checking in
- Teens' responsibilities should grow throughout high school, by senior year they should have household responsibilities including: doing their own laundry; making a doctor's appointment and knowing how family's insurance works; making some choices about spending money and other financial responsibility
- Continue to have limits and boundaries, with consequences that you enforce

Additional Resources:

A helpful website for hints on communicating with your teen: The Center for Parent & Teen Communication
<https://parentandteen.com>

Parenting Strategies for the Teen Years https://www.wfm.noaa.gov/pdfs/ParentingYourTeen_Handout1.pdf

What Teens Need Most from Their Parents <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-teens-need-most-from-their-parents-1470765906>

Conversations to have before your teen leaves for college

- ✓ Tell your teen how proud you are of her, how happy you are to be his parent and that you are always going to be there for her. Even better, write a letter expressing these thoughts for him to open after you've left him at college.
- ✓ Listen to your teen's hopes, fears and expectations for college. Ask questions, listen, reassure and brainstorm.
- ✓ Talk about academics: college classes will be different from high school and likely will be harder, offer advice about finding balance; what are your expectations (if your child is receiving aid, what are the requirements for her to continue to receive that aid); how will he communicate his grades to you.
- ✓ Start a conversation about time management.
- ✓ An honest and frank talk about drugs and alcohol.
- ✓ Discuss love, sex and consent.
- ✓ Educate about health and safety.
- ✓ Make an agreement about money.

For in-depth suggestions: <https://www.ahaparenting.com/Ages-stages/teenagers/discussions-before-prepare-college>

How to Cope with Negativity

1. Understand and accept that rejecting everything your parent does or thinks is an adolescent's job
2. Remember how teens brains works (hint: the rational part of their brain is still developing and until it's fully developed around age 25 they are still ruled mostly by their emotions), Here's a link to a helpful article: <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=understanding-the-teen-brain-1-3051>
3. Take a deep breath and keep your cool.

4. Figure out what they (and you) are feeling. Try to take a step back to acknowledge that all feelings are okay – including negative ones.
5. Communicate that you think you understand what they are feeling and why. Then **ask** if you have gotten it right, and if not, can they correct your misunderstanding. Ask them to do the same for what you are feeling, in other words, make sure everyone's on the same page.
6. "Support their work to come up with a strategy for moving forward. For parents, the idea is not to squelch the negative thought. Research has found that attempted "thought stopping" can actually make the idea stickier. Rather, you want your child to face the thought, thoroughly examine it and replace it with a more realistic and helpful perspective." Mary Alvord in <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/09/09/549133027/for-teens-knee-deep-in-negativity-reframing-thoughts-can-help>
7. Find a way to let them know that you love them unconditionally.

Want to learn more?

Keep Teens Talking: Learn to Listen, Not React <https://parentandteen.com/keep-teens-talking-learn-to-listen/>

How to Help Teenagers Embrace Stress <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/19/well/family/how-to-help-teenagers-embrace-stress.html>

Staying Connected to Your Teen <https://www.ahaparenting.com/ages-stages/teenagers/parent-teen-relationship>

How to Help Teens Weather Their Emotional Storms <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/12/well/family/how-to-help-teens-weather-their-emotional-storms.html>

When Teens Need Their Friends More Than Their Parents

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/when_teens_need_their_friends_more_than_their_parents

Share these links with your teen:

From Common Sense Media, best health and wellness websites for teens:

<https://www.common Sense Media.org/lists/best-health-and-wellness-sites-for-kids-and-teens>

Why Do I fight with My Parents So Much? <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/fight.html?WT.ac=ctg#catfamilies>

Self-Care in the Countdown to Teen's Leaving Home: Empty Nest = Empty Next

"It's not so much the emptying of the nest that's the issue — it's the meaning a couple brings to the emptying of the nest...grieving is normal, whether you're launching a first child or the last...What you're grieving is that the role you had as a parent is different now." Sarah Elizabeth Adler in <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2018/empty-nest-advice.html>

Empty Nest Syndrome: you're not alone in feeling down when your teen leaves home. There isn't a clinical diagnosis, but many parents feel profound sadness. What can you do?

- Plan ahead for the inevitable separation. Try to anticipate how you think you are going to feel; make a plan to respond but remember that your actual feelings when the time comes may be unexpected.
- Keep in touch with your teen. Before you leave them in their dorm or apartment, agree on your expectations for keeping in touch. Give your child space to find their footing away from home. Resist the temptation to text or call, let them initiate the conversation. However, if you have reason to believe that things are going badly wrong, become more engaged.
- Reconnect with your spouse or partner and any children still at home. It may take work to re-align your relationships.
- Seek support from friends and family. Connecting with other parents can remind you that what you may be feeling isn't unique and supporting each other will help you stay positive.
- Don't feel guilty when you're relieved when they return to college after their first long trip home! Remember, there's a good chance they'll be back in their old room for a time after graduating. Then you'll look back longingly to the time they were away!

Additional reading:

Empty Nest Syndrome: Tips for Coping <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/empty-nest-syndrome/art-20047165>

How to Thrive in an Empty Nest <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/well/family/how-to-thrive-in-an-empty-nest.html>

How to Cope with an Empty Nest <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2018/empty-nest-advice.html>

Find the slides from today's workshop, today's handout as well as links to additional parenting resources at www.spenj.org

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