

Skills for Good Parenting: High School and Beyond - Introduction

Good parenting is all about parenting the child that you have. This means that you have to alter your approach as your child passes through the various developmental stages on his way to adulthood. The social and emotional stage of your child determines how he feels, thinks and interacts with others. As a parent, it is important to calibrate your words and actions based on the appropriate developmental stage. And don't forget that social and emotional development don't always synch up with intellectual development.

Since an approach that might work for a toddler would be totally ineffective when dealing with a high school student, we have taken the skills covered by COPE's Skills for Good Parenting parent workshop and broken them down based on four developmental levels. **Skills for Good Parenting: High School** is a look at parent skills that we hope will help you deal effectively with your child between the ages of 15 and up. There are similar Skills for Good Parenting sequences for Early Childhood (ages 2-5), Elementary Ages (ages-11), and Middle School (ages 12 to 14). We hope that this series will help you provide a happy and stable environment for your child to develop as an independent and resilient individual.

During the high school years, each teen forms their own identity. They examine the values, beliefs and behaviors of others, organizing those perceptions into a coherent world view for themselves, sometimes at odds with that of their families.

As teens approach adulthood, they desire and need more independence. At the same time, it is important that they face the consequences of their actions.

Friendships are based on loyalty, understanding and trust. They appreciate honesty and straightforwardness from adults as they are making conscious choices about which adults to trust.

They are capable of systematic problem solving, able to consider multiple solutions and plan a course of action for themselves. However, reasoning skills are the last part of brain development (often not completed until the mid to late 20s) to occur. This means that they may behave in reactive, impulsive or novel ways, since their brain's decision-making structure is still under construction. This means that they often cannot explain or understand their own actions.

It may help to keep in mind that, just as boys and girls bodies develop differently and at a different pace, generally, boys' brains are more driven to understand how things work; girls' brains are more interested in how people feel. This is as much a function of socialization as biology.

This development doesn't magically end at age 18. Social, emotional and brain development continues well into the 20s.

*There is a worksheet that accompanies this series of articles, as well as a resource guide with links to further reading and additional material. You may want to print out the worksheet before reading further, so you can pause, reflect and take notes. The worksheet and resource guide are listed with the other "chapters" in the **Skills for Good Parenting: High School** list of topics.*