



June 2009

In This Issue

What the experts recommend

- Self-Motivate
- Camps and Courses
- Mentor Programs
- What else can parents do?

Top 10 Mistakes parents make with teens.

Helping to Motivate Teens



The teenage years can take a toll on not only the teen, but the parents as well. One way to help transition through these years a bit smoother is to help to find motivation tools and ways to instill responsibility in these young adults. Although motivation tools can be very helpful, successfully putting these into action can be a very frustrating and demanding job. This newsletter offers several motivation tools to help with your teen and yourself as a parent as well.

“What the experts recommend”.¹

Self-Motivate

Many experts have seen that teens who are forced to motivate themselves feel at that point they are the most strongly encouraged and supported, than compared to having others push motivation on them, especially parents. Students can learn to motivate themselves through clubs, groups or organizations that require positive peer influence and decision-making.

Camps and Courses

Many parents especially seem to find it hard to motivate their teen during the summer months, but many summer camps and teen-based courses focus on teaching teens the basics of independent living and community participation. By having your teen attend these camps it will help them to learn the more important and complex lessons of life after high school, and also help them to realize how their current choices impact their long-term success. These camps again instill a sense of self-motivation with the guidance of expert sources and opportunities.

Mentor Programs

Many high schools also offer mentor programs for students to work with a fellow teen on anything from homework to just serving as a troubled teen's friend and companion. The mentor can help the teen to constructively work through problems, discuss issues and pressures and work through other problems the teen may be having. This avenue is a positive alternative to forcing students to deal with struggles on their own, especially when parents are finding it difficult to connect with their teen.

Online Resources may be found at the bottom of this newsletter.

What else can parents do?

Parents can also support un-motivated teens by helping to identify their teenager's strengths and abilities. Parents should encourage their teen's achievements by offering support and enthusiasm. Parents must learn to honor their teen's learning styles, help them to discover their unique ability and give them appropriate tools for successful achievement.



Top 10 Mistakes Parents Make with Teens.²

1. Lecture Rather than Discuss

Treating your teen like a little child rather than a budding adult simply alienates teens. It is not to say that they no longer need guidance, but it just has to be handled in a more adult manner, with discussion, negotiation and understanding of the conflicting needs of maturing teens.

2. Ignore the Obvious

Do not write off your teens actions as "normal teen behavior". Parents frequently wait until a situation is urgent, burying their heads in the sand to avoid confrontation and more displays of teen's belligerent, hostile attitude.

3. Not Following Through on Rules and Consequences

Most parents have no problem creating punishments for breaking the rules, but if you set rules, it is important to make clear in advance the consequences for breaking that rule. If that rule is broken, and you do not enforce the consequences you set, your teen has just learned that getting way with breaking the rules is an easy task. Set the consequences and stick to them.

4. Setting Unreasonable Goals

Make sure to set attainable goals for your teen. Set expectations that allow your teen to succeed based on his or her abilities.

5. Pointing Out Only the Negative, Expecting Only the Positive

Encouraging a teen with a parent's positive feedback is a great way to help support your teen. This is not to say you should jump up and down with joy just because your child didn't skip class this week. If you set consequences for bad behavior, the reward is getting to do the things they normally enjoy.

6. Leaving the Education up to "Someone Else"

Do not assume your child will learn all about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and other risky behaviors at school or elsewhere. Parents who

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Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30-5:00pm. Evening hours are available on a limited basis.

(540) 989-6605 or 800-699-9396

Nights and weekends call RESPOND:

(540) 776-1100 or 800-541-9992

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talk to their teens about high-risk behaviors and who set clear guidelines about the consequences of these behaviors are less likely to engage in these activities.

7. Giving Up on Family Time- Too Much of a Hassle

Setting time aside every day for the family to eat together and talk is one of the best defenses against negative peer influences on your teens. Making time on a daily basis is the best way to keep communication open. Parents will be more attune to changes in their teens demeanor and behavior if communication is kept on a daily basis compared to those who do not.

8. Assume Good Grades Mean No Other Problems

Don't write off other signs of trouble just because the grades are not slipping. Teens may know that by maintain their grades they will avoid your suspicion. Keep on open line of communication at all times, even if you think things are "normal".

9. Not Taking the Time to Know What's Up with Adolescents Today

Every teen generation deals with new problems and influences. Media influences are much stronger today than previous teen generations. It is a good idea to know the Internet and other cultural influences that may impact your child and their decision making. One of the best ways is to put computers in common areas, making it more difficult for teens to secretly visit sites that might negatively influence their choices or even put them in danger.

10. Giving Up Too Soon: Forgetting the "Three Times" Rule

Many teens have found a way to get what they want and will not back down until they get what they want. Face it: your teen is going to test your resolve. They know if you are tired and frustrated, but don't give up. Be consistent.

Frequently, parents feel that getting help for your teen means that you are losing your battle as a parent, but instead you are actually helping.

Psychological Health-Roanoke offers many services that may provide help for you and your teen:

- June Alder, Ph.D.- Offers adolescents, group and family counseling
- Emily DeFrance, Ph.D., LCP- Offers children and adolescent counseling
- Dorene Fick, LCSW- Offers parenting counseling
- Charles Finn, LPC- Offers adolescent counseling
- Maureen Guelzow, Ph.D., LPC- Offers family counseling
- Barbara Horton, LCSW- Offers adolescent and family counseling
- Cathy Taylor, Psy.D.- Offers children and adolescent counseling
- Jackie Wilkerson, Ph.D., LPC- Offers family and adolescent counseling

Resources:

- 1) <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/64>
 - 2) <http://www.byparents-forparents.com/article7.html>
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