

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Mountain Education Charter High School

***still make the difference!***



## Show your teenager how to make responsible decisions

**Y**our teen will have to make all kinds of decisions over the course of his high school career, from selecting classes to facing difficult peer pressure. Help him learn to make decisions that will enable him to succeed both academically and socially.

If your teen comes to you with a problem, walk through these steps:

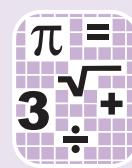
1. **Ask him to describe** the situation he is facing. Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered with just *yes* or *no*.
2. **Discuss possible choices.** Help your teen see different alternatives. Encourage him to make a pro/con list and evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of every option. Talk through how different consequences could affect his goals.

3. **Allow your teen to make** a decision and carry it out. Later, ask him what he learned from making that choice. Ask if he would make the same—or a different—decision if faced with a similar problem in the future.

Remember: While it may sometimes seem like your teen is challenging your values and beliefs, he still needs your support and guidance to make important decisions about his future. Teens often rebel as a way to assert their independence. But with your support and unconditional love, he will develop the judgment that will guide him to make responsible decisions.

**Source:** American Medical Association, "Helping Your Teen Make Responsible Choices," Palo Alto Medical Foundation, [nswc.com/responsible\\_choice](http://nswc.com/responsible_choice).

## Success begins with a positive attitude



Having a positive attitude is important for success in school and in life. To nurture positivity,

encourage your teen to:

- **Be hopeful.** On most days, some things will go well and others won't. Remind your teen not to dwell on what went wrong. Help her focus on what went well.
- **Laugh.** Nothing is better than humor for getting rid of a negative attitude.
- **Move on.** Your teen didn't get picked for a certain team and the next chance to try out isn't until next year. After some disappointment, encourage her to put it behind her and try something else for the time being.
- **Seek opportunities.** If your teen wants to work with animals, she should look for a way to make it happen. Is there a veterinarian in your area who could use some help? Encourage your teen to call a few of them and find out!

**Source:** B.A. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide to Building Character*, Free Spirit Publishing.

# Motivate your teen to read by recommending specific books



Teens are much more likely to do things when they are given specific instructions rather than general suggestions. “Take out the trash and put away your laundry” usually gets better results than “You should finish your chores.”

This same idea also works when encouraging teens to read. Suggesting a specific book for your teen to read may be more effective than saying, “You really should read more.” But with all the books out there, how do you know which one to recommend?

That’s where Goodreads comes in—the world’s largest website for readers and book recommendations. You can

browse titles by category or check out a list of the most popular young adult books, which is updated monthly. Goodreads even has an app you can download on your phone.

So before you and your teen head to the library, check out [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com) and make a list of books to look for.

**“Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are.”**

—Mason Cooley

# Researchers find a link between screen time and depression



In the last few years, there has been a significant increase in teenage depression and suicides. What has changed in teens’ lives to cause such a shift?

Researchers reviewed countless studies to find out. At first, they wondered if increased school pressures could be the cause. But they found that the time teens devote to homework has barely budged.

They also ruled out family finances as a cause of increased stress. The changes couldn’t explain the dramatic increase in teenage suicide and depression.

So what’s the cause? The researchers concluded that it may be, literally, right at your teen’s fingertips. The rise in teen depression tracks closely to the increase in the use of smart phones by teens. In particular, the time teens spend using social media

on their phones can cause them to feel unhappy and anxious.

Most people try to create a positive image in their online posts. But while adults know that those people still face problems, teens don’t always understand that. They may believe that everyone else is living perfect lives.

The more time teens spend online, the less happy they seem to be. Those who are online five hours or more a day are much more likely to have at least one risk factor for suicide.

Smart phones and social media aren’t going away. So, talk to your teen about how social media isn’t always an accurate reflection of people’s lives. Then work together to limit screen time. See the quiz on this page for specific tips.

**Source:** J.M. Twenge and others, “Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time,” *Clinical Psychological Science*, [nswc.com/high\\_suicide](http://nswc.com/high_suicide).

# Are you helping your teen limit screen time?



Teens are spending more and more time online and in front of screens. Are you finding ways to help your teen limit his recreational screen time? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you established times** when devices are not allowed, such as during mealtimes and study times?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you limit access** to devices in your teen’s bedroom? He shouldn’t have a TV in his room or be using a laptop or tablet to stream shows.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you make sure** your teen is offline during homework time (unless he needs the internet for an assignment)?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you enforce a digital curfew**—a certain time when the cell phone must be parked in a central place? It should not be in your teen’s bedroom at night.
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you suggest alternatives?**

When you see your teen mindlessly staring at a screen, ask him to go on a walk or listen to some music.

## How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are taking steps to limit your teen’s online time. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Teach your teen the six-question method for taking notes



Taking notes while reading is one of the best ways for your teen to remember what she has studied. The

six-question method is one effective way to take notes. It helps students identify and remember the most important people, events and dates when studying history or reading literature.

Have your teen create six headings on a piece of paper: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* As she reads an assignment, have her look for the answers to each of these questions and jot down relevant facts and information:

1. **Who?** Who was there? Who were the most important characters?
2. **What?** What were the most important things that happened?

3. **Where?** Where did this event take place? Why is that place significant? Would the event have been different if it had occurred elsewhere?

4. **When?** When did it happen? Were there any important reasons the event happened when it did (and not earlier or later)?

5. **Why?** What were the causes of this event? Why is it important to learn about this event?

6. **How?** How did it happen? How did it turn out?

If your teen has trouble finding answers to these questions when she's reading, suggest that she practice by reading an article from the newspaper. News stories aim to answer these six questions in the first few paragraphs.

# Naps can help teens get the sleep they need for school success



Most teenagers need about nine hours of sleep every day. But very few of them actually get the sleep

they need. Schools start early. Athletics and other extracurricular activities are time-consuming. Homework takes up time in the evening. As a result, many teens live their lives in a constant state of sleep deprivation.

A new study shows that short naps can help teens make up some of the sleep they need. A short rest of 30 to 60 minutes can help teens increase their attention and reduce fatigue. That means they are more alert and better able to focus on their studies.

That's why some schools in China schedule naptime right after lunch—not for young students, but for high schoolers.

If your teen seems constantly tired, encourage him to schedule a short sleep break after school. A regular napping habit can help your teen make up for missing sleep.

However, be cautious of when and how long your teen sleeps. Experts recommend that teens take naps before 4:00 p.m., as later naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. They also advise keeping naps under 60 minutes.

**Source:** X. Ji and others, "The Relationship Between Midday Napping And Neurocognitive Function in Early Adolescents," *Behavioral Sleep Medicine*, nswc.com/high\_napping.

**Q:** My daughter has a bad habit of putting things off. If she has a big paper due, she waits until the night before to get started—sometimes until very late on the night before. She's very bright, but her grades suffer. How can I help her break the procrastination habit?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** We all put some things off from time to time. But when it gets to be a habit, as it has for your daughter, procrastination can have serious consequences.

Help your teen think about why she puts things off. She may be afraid of failing. She may simply like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute. She may be a perfectionist ("What if I try and don't get an A?"). Or maybe she simply doesn't feel like starting things until the last minute.

Whatever the cause, she needs to work on changing this habit before she gets to college or the workplace.

Start by helping your teen break up those large, tough projects into smaller chunks. Then have her set deadlines for each chunk. Yes, she may still wait until close to the deadline to finish each part, but bit by bit she'll get the job done. And once she gets started on a project, she'll find that it's often easier to keep working.

As she finishes each task, she should give herself a small reward. Perhaps she can spend some time reading a favorite magazine after she's finished her work for the night.

Finally, make sure she sees each assignment in terms of her long-term goals. Learning how to study and manage her time wisely will help her with her goal of being successful in school ... and in life.



# It Matters: Working Together

## Stay engaged during the high school years!



When your teen reaches high school, your involvement with his education is likely to change. Now you're more like a coach—on the sidelines but still very involved with the game.

Here are some ways to stay involved:

- **Talk with your teen** regularly about his classes. Discuss what he's learning.
- **Get to know** your teen's teachers, counselors and the office staff.
- **Help your teen manage** school projects. These can be challenging for some teens. Work with him to develop a realistic plan for getting things accomplished.
- **Use all the tools available** to monitor your teen's attendance and school performance. If there is a way to check grades online, do that regularly. When progress reports or report cards are sent home, take time to discuss them with your teen.
- **Be aware of the requirements** for graduation. Don't wait until the last few weeks of your teen's senior year to discover he hasn't met the requirements to graduate with his class.
- **Help your teen make a plan** for the future. Work with the school to make sure he takes the classes he needs to be ready for a career or college after high school.
- **Serve on school committees** or volunteer at school events, if possible. They are great ways to meet your teen's friends and to know what's going on in school.

## Talk to your teen about ways to show respect in school

**Y**our teen may not excel in every class she takes, but if she treats her teachers with respect, she'll be a faculty favorite.

At a time when the whole world seems to be in a manners meltdown, teachers appreciate students who:

1. **Are polite.** They say *please* and *thank you*.
2. **Listen** when others are speaking—especially the teacher!
3. **Say they're sorry** (and mean it) if they've made a mistake.
4. **Express their ideas** without putting classmates down.

What can you do to encourage your teen's respectful behavior at school? You can:

- **Be a good role model.** When you are talking with your teen, call teachers by their names—not “that math teacher.”



- **Meet your teen's teachers.** It's always easier to work together once you have spoken in person.
- **Help your teen** put minor complaints in perspective. He may be upset with something a teacher said in class. Tell him, “Teaching is hard work. She was probably just tired.”

## School counselors can help your teen with college applications



Maybe your teen has his heart set on attending a certain college. Or perhaps he has no idea of where he wants to go—or whether he could get in.

As high school students move through the process of applying for college, their school counselors become valuable allies.

Your teen's counselor is available to help with:

- **Selecting schools.** Even if he wants to go to a particular college, it's a good idea for your teen to apply to

several schools. His counselor can work with him to select schools that would be a good fit.

- **Writing a recommendation.** Many colleges ask counselors to write a description of the student. Your teen can make his counselor's job easier by preparing a short résumé which includes his accomplishments in and out of school.
- **Staying on top** of paperwork. From applications to student aid, there's a lot to keep track of. Most teens need parents and counselors to support them in this task!